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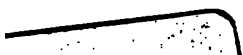
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Christopher Columbus.



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THE LIFE AND TIMES

OF

CHRISTOPHER
COLUMBUS,



TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF

A. DE LAMARTINE.

—



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CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

A.D. 1492.

Introduction.



PROVIDENCE conceals itself in the detail of human affairs, but becomes unveiled in the generalities of history. No sensible person has ever denied, that the great events which mark the history of man, are connected and linked together by an invisible chain. Supported by the almighty hand of the great Creator of worlds, to give them unity of design and plan, how can he be blind who has given sight to the eye? How can he who has endowed his work with thought, be himself without thought?

The ancients gave to this occult, absolute, and irresistible influence of God over human affairs,

the name of Destiny, or Fate ; the moderns call it Providence, a more intelligent, more religious, and more affectionate name. In studying the history of humanity, it is impossible not to discern the paramount action of Providence concurrent with, and controlling, the free action of man. This general and collective movement is not in any way incompatible with the freedom of will, in which alone depends the morality of individuals and of nations ; it seems to let them move, act, and go astray, with complete liberty of intention, and of choice of good and evil, in a certain sphere of action, and with a fixed logical sequence of penalties incurred, or rewards deserved, according to the intention, whether vicious, or good ; but it reserves to itself the guidance of the great general results of these acts of individuals or nations. It appears to select them, independently of us, for divine ends with which we are unacquainted, and of which it allows us only an indistinct suspicion, when they are almost attained. Good and evil belong to ourselves and are in our power ; but Providence uses our vices and our virtues alike, and with the same unfailing wisdom obtains from evil as from good, the accomplishment of its designs respecting humanity. The hidden, but divine instrument of this Providence, when it thinks fit to make use of men to prepare or accomplish a part of its plans, is inspiration.

Inspiration is indeed a human mystery, for which it is difficult to find a cause in man himself. It seems to come from a higher and more distant source. Hence has arisen a name, mysterious also, and not well defined in any language,—*genius*. Providence causes a man of genius to be born ; genius is a gift, it is not acquired by labour, nor is it even obtained by virtue ; it exists, or it exists not, without its possessor being able to explain its nature or how he came to possess it. To this genius, Providence sends an inspiration. Inspiration is to genius, what the magnet is to steel ; it attracts it, irrespectively of all knowledge or will, towards something fatal and unknown, as to its pole. Genius follows the inspiration by which it is attracted, and an ideal or an actual world is discovered.

So was it with Christopher Columbus and the discovery of America.

Columbus aspired in thought to the completion of the globe, which appeared to him to want one of its hemispheres. The idea of the earth's geographical unity incited him. This notion was generally prevalent in his time. There seem to be ideas floating in the air, a species of intellectual miasmata, which thousands of men, without concert, breathe at once.

Whenever Providence is preparing the world, unknown to itself, for a religious, moral, or

political change, this phenomenon may generally be observed—a tendency or progress more or less complete, to the unity of the earth by conquest, language, religious proselytism, navigation, geographical discovery, or the multiplication of the relations of different countries with each other, by the facilitation of intercourse and frequency of contact between those countries, of which easy means of communication, common necessities, and exchanges, make but one people. This tendency to the unity of the earth at certain periods, is one of the most remarkable instances of providential interference that occurs in history.

Thus, when the great oriental civilization of India and Egypt seems effete from age, and God wishes to call Asia and the West to a younger, more active, and more stirring civilization, Alexander starts, without well knowing why, from the valleys of Macedonia, taking with him the enthusiasm and the soldiers of Greece; and before the terror and glory of his name, the known world becomes one, from the Indus to the extremes of Europe.

When He wishes to prepare an immense audience for the transforming word of Christianity in the East and in the West, He spreads the language, the dominion, and the arms of Rome and of Cæsar from the shores of the Persian Gulf to the mountains of Scotland, uniting under one


mind and under a common authority, Italy, the two Gauls, Great Britain, Sicily, Greece, Africa, and Asia.

When He desires, some centuries afterwards, to spatch Arabia, Persia, and their dependencies, from barbarism, and to make the resistless doctrine of the Divine Unity prevail over the idolatries or indifferences of these remote or corrupt portions of the world, He arms Mahomet with the Koran and the sword : He permits the religion of Islam in two centuries to conquer all the space comprised between the Oxus and the Tagus, Thibet and Lebanon, Atlas and Taurus. An immense unity of empire is the sure forerunner of unity of thought.

So with Charlemagne in the West, when his universal monarchy, bestriding the Alps, prepares, even in Scythia and Germany, the vast field in which Christian civilization is to receive and baptize the barbarians.

So also with the French Revolution, that reform of the western world by reason, when Napoleon, as enterprising as Alexander, and more blind, marches his victorious armies over the subjugated continent of Europe, constitutes for a moment the great unity of France, and, hoping to found an empire, only succeeds in sowing the seeds of the language, the ideas, and the institutions of the Revolution.

Thus too, in our days,—no longer in the shape of conquest, but under the form of intellectual, commercial, and peaceful communications amongst all the continents and all the nations of the earth,—science becomes the universal conqueror, to the advantage and honour of all. Providence seems now to have charged the genius of industry and of discovery, with the task of preparing for Him the most complete unity of the terrestrial globe that has ever condensed time, space, and people into a close, compact, and homogeneous mass. Navigation, printing, the discovery of steam—that cheap and irresistible power which propels man, with his armies and his merchandise, as far and as quick as his thoughts; the construction of railroads, which pass through mountain and over valley, bringing all the earth to one level; the discovery of the electric telegraph, which gives to communications between the two hemispheres the rapidity of lightning; the invention of balloons, to which a helm is still wanting, but which will soon render the air a more simple and more universal element of navigation than the ocean: all these nearly contemporary revelations of Providence through the inspiration of the spirit of industry, are means of concentration, drawing the earth as it were together, and instruments of union and assimilation for the human race. These means are so active and so evident, that it is



impossible not to perceive in them a new plan of Providence, a new tendency in an unknown direction,—impossible to avoid the conclusion that God meditates for us or for our descendants, some design still hidden to our narrow sight ; a design for which He is taking measures, by causing the world to advance to the most powerful of unities, the unity of thought, which announces some great unity of action in the future.

In like manner was the spirit of the fifteenth century prepared for some great human or divine manifestation, when the illustrious man, whose history we are about to relate, was born. Something was expected ; for the human mind has its forebodings, the vague presages of approaching events.







Christopher Columbus.



CHAPTER I.

IN the spring of the year 1471, at mid-day, beneath the burning sun that scorched the roads of Andalusia, on a hill about half a league from the little seaport of Palos, two strangers, travelling on foot, their shoes almost worn out with walking, their dress, which still retained the marks of gentility, soiled with dust; and their foreheads streaming with perspiration, stopped to sit down beneath the shade of the outer porch of a little convent called Santa Maria de Rabida. Their appearance and fatigue were a sufficient prayer for hospitality. The Franciscan convents were at that period the hostelrys for all pedestrians whose poverty prevented their seeking another refuge. These two strangers attracted the attention of the monks.

One was a man who had scarcely reached the prime of life, tall in stature, powerfully built, of majestic gait, with a noble forehead, open countenance, thoughtful look, and pleasing and elegant mouth. His hair, in his youth of a light auburn, was sprinkled here and there about the temples with the white streaks prematurely traced by misfortune and mental anxiety. His forehead was high ; his complexion, once rosy, had been made pale by study, and bronzed by sun and sea. The tone of his voice was deep and sonorous, powerful and impressive, as that of a man accustomed to utter profound reflections. There was nothing of levity or thoughtlessness in his behaviour : everything was grave and deliberate, even in his slightest movement : he seemed to have a modest self-respect, and to retain habitually the controlled demeanour of a pious worshipper, as though he always felt himself to be in the presence of God.

The other was a child of eight or ten years old. His features, more feminine, but already matured by the fatigues of life, bore so strong a resemblance to those of the other stranger, that it was impossible to avoid taking him for a son or a brother of the elder man.

The two strangers were Christopher Columbus and his son Diego. The monks, interested and moved at the sight of the noble countenance of the father and the elegance of the child, in such strong



contrast with the poverty of their condition, invited them into the monastery to partake of the shelter, the food, and the rest, always accorded to wayfarers. While Columbus and his child were refreshing and recruiting their strength with the water, bread, and olives, supplied by their hosts, the monks went to inform the prior of the arrival of the two guests, and of the singular interest inspired by their noble appearance, so little in accordance with their poverty. The prior came down to converse with them.

The superior of this convent of La Rabida was Juan Perez de Marchenna, formerly confessor to Queen Isabella, who then reigned over Spain with Ferdinand. A man of piety, of science, and of thought, he had preferred the retirement of the cloister to the honours and intrigues of the Court ; but this very retirement had secured him great respect in the palace, and great influence over the mind of the Queen. Providence, rather than chance, appeared to have directed the steps of Columbus, as if it had intended to open to him, by a safe, though unseen hand, the readiest approaches to the ear, the mind, and the heart of the sovereigns.

The prior saluted the stranger, caressed the child, and kindly inquired into the circumstances which obliged them to travel on foot through the by-roads of Spain, and to seek the humble roof of

a poor and lonely monastery. Columbus related his obscure life, and unfolded his stirring thoughts to the attentive monk. This life, these thoughts, were but an expectation and a foreboding. This has since been learnt of them.

Christopher Columbus was the eldest son of a Genoese wool-carder, a business now low, but then respectable, and almost noble. In the manufacturing and commercial republics of Italy, the operatives, proud of their discoveries and inventions, formed guilds, which were ennobled by their arts, and influential in the state. Christopher was born in 1436. He had two brothers, Bartholomew and Diego, whom he afterwards sent for, to share his labours, his fame, and his adversity. He had also a sister, younger than her brothers. She married a Genoese artisan, and obscurity long sheltered her from the glory and misfortunes of her kindred.

Our tastes depend on the first views which nature presents to our eyes in the places of our birth, especially when these views are majestic and infinite, like mountains, sea, and sky. Our imagination is but the echo and reflection of the scenes which have originally struck us. The first looks of Columbus, while an infant, were upon the heavens and the sea of Genoa. Astronomy and navigation soon directed his thoughts to the spaces thus spread before his eyes. He peopled them in

his imagination, before he filled their charts with continents and islands. Contemplative, taciturn, and from his earliest years disposed to piety, his genius carried him, while yet a child, far and high through space, not only to vaster discoveries, but to more fervent worship. What, in the divine works, he sought beyond all things, was God himself.

His father, a man of liberal mind, and wealthy in his trade, did not attempt to oppose the studious bent of his son's inclinations. He sent him to Pavia, to study geometry, geography, astronomy, astrology (an imaginary science of that day), and navigation. His powers soon overstepped the limits of those sciences, in their then incomplete state. He was one of those that always pass beyond the boundary at which the common run of people stop, and cry "Enough." At fourteen years of age he knew all that was taught in the schools; and he returned to his family at Genoa. His mind could not brook the sedentary and unintellectual confinement of his father's business. He sailed for several years in trading vessels and ships of war, and in the adventurous expeditions which the great houses of Genoa launched on the Mediterranean, to contest its waves and its ports with the Spaniard, the Arab, and the Moor; a sort of perpetual crusade, in which trade, war, and religion, made


these fleets of the Italian republics, schools of commerce, of wealth, of heroism, and of devotion. At once a sailor, a philosopher, and a soldier, he embarked in one of the vessels which his country lent the Duke of Anjou when he went to conquer Naples, in the fleet which the King of Naples sent to attack Tunis, and the squadrons despatched by Genoa against Spain. He even rose, it is said, to the command of some of the obscure naval expeditions of the city. But history loses sight of him in this, his early career. His destiny was not there ; he felt himself trammelled in the narrow seas, and amidst those small events. His thoughts were vaster than his country. He meditated a conquest for the human race, not for the little republic of Liguria.

During the intervals between his expeditions, Christopher Columbus found means of satisfying, by the study of his art, his fondness for geography and navigation, and of increasing his humble fortune. He drew, engraved, and sold nautical charts ; and this business afforded him a scanty livelihood. He looked to it less with a view to gain than to the progress of science. His mind and his feelings, always fixed on the sea and stars, secretly pursued an object known but to himself.

A shipwreck, caused by his vessel taking fire in the roads of Lisbon, after a naval engagement, obliged him to remain in Portugal. He threw

himself into the water to escape the fire ; and, supporting himself by an oar with one hand, and swimming with the other, he reached the shore. Portugal, then completely occupied with the passion for maritime discovery, was a field suited to his inclinations. He hoped to find in it opportunities and means of sailing where he pleased over the ocean : he only found the unpleasing sedentary labour of the geographer, obscurity and love. As he went each day to attend the religious services in the church of a convent at Lisbon, he became fondly attached to a young recluse, whose beauty had struck him. She was the daughter of an Italian nobleman in the service of Portugal. Her father had confided her to the care of the sisters of this convent before starting on a distant naval expedition. Her name was Filippa da Palestrello. Attracted on her part by the thoughtful and majestic beauty of the young stranger, whom she saw regularly attending divine service in the church, she felt the same passion she had inspired. Both without relations and without fortune, in a foreign land, there was nothing to interfere with their mutual attachment ; and they married, relying on Providence and on labour, the only wealth of Filippa and her husband. In order to support himself, with his wife and mother-in-law, he continued the business of making his maps and globes, which were much sought after,

on account of their accuracy, by the Portuguese mariners. The papers of his father-in-law, which his wife handed over to him, and his correspondence with Toscanelli, the famous Florentine geographer, gave him, it is said, precise information about the distant seas of India, as well as the means of rectifying the then confused or fabulous elements of navigation. He was entirely absorbed in his domestic happiness and geographical studies, when his wife gave birth to a son, whom he called Diego, after his brother. His intimate associates were only mariners either returned from distant expeditions, or dreaming of unknown lands, and unbeaten paths, in the ocean. His warehouse of charts and globes was a source of ideas, conjectures, and projects, which kept his imagination always fixed on the unsolved problems of the world. His wife, the child and sister of seamen, shared his enthusiasm. While turning his globes under his hand, or dotting his charts with islands and continents, his attention had been seized by the immense void space in the middle of the Atlantic. On that side, the earth seemed to want the counterpoise of a continent. The imaginations of navigators were excited by vague, wondrous, and terrible rumours, of shores indistinctly seen from the mountains of the Azores — said by some to be floating, and by others fixed, appearing at intervals in clear weather — but




disappearing or seeming to retire when any venturous pilot endeavoured to approach them. A Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, then regarded as an inventor of fables, and whose veracity time has since shown, related to the West the wonders of the deserts, the states, and the civilization of Tartary, of India, and of China, which was then supposed to extend into the space really occupied by the Americas. Columbus himself expected to find, on the other side of the Atlantic, those countries of gold, pearls, and myrrh, from which Solomon drew his wealth—the Ophir of the Bible, since veiled by the clouds of distance and of fable. It was not a new continent, but a lost continent, that he sought. The pursuit of a falsehood was leading him to truth.

His calculations, founded on Ptolemy and the Arabian geographers, led him to suppose that the earth was a globe which it was possible to journey round. He considered this globe less by some thousands of miles than it really is. He therefore concluded that the extent of sea to be passed before reaching these unknown countries of India was less than navigators usually thought. The existence of these lands seemed to be confirmed by the singular testimony of the pilots who had sailed the farthest beyond the Azores. Some had seen, floating on the waves, branches of trees unknown in the West ; others, pieces of wood carved,

but not with steel tools ; others, huge pines hollowed into canoes of a single log capable of carrying eighty rowers ; others, gigantic reeds ; others, again, had seen corpses of white or copper-coloured men, whose features did not at all resemble the races of western Europe, of Asia, or of Africa.

All these indications, floating from time to time in the ocean, after storms, combined with the vague instinct which always precedes events, even as the shadow goes before one who has the sun at his back, appeared as marvels to the ignorant, but were regarded by Columbus as proofs that other lands existed beyond those engraved by geographers on their maps of the world. He was, however, convinced that these lands were only the prolongation of Asia, which would thus occupy more than a third of the circumference of the globe. This circumference being then unknown to philosophers and geometricians the extent of the ocean which would have to be crossed in order to reach this imaginary Asia, was left entirely to conjecture. Some thought it incommensurable ; others considered it a species of deep and boundless ether, in which navigators might lose themselves, as *aéronauts* do now in the wastes of the atmosphere. The greater number, ignorant of the laws of gravity, and of the attraction which draws all things towards the centre, and yet nevertheless admitting the roundness of the globe, thought that



vessels and men, if they could ever reach the antipodes, would start away from the earth and fall eternally through the abysses of infinite space. The laws which govern the level and movement of the ocean were alike unknown to them. They considered the sea—beyond a certain horizon bounded by isles already known—as a liquid chaos whose huge waves rose into inaccessible mountains, leaving between them bottomless abysses, into which they rolled down from above in irresistible cataracts, which would swallow any vessels daring enough to brave them. The more learned, while they admitted the laws of gravity and of a certain level in the liquid spaces, thought that the spherical form of the earth would give the ocean a slope towards the antipodes, might carry vessels onwards to nameless shores, but would not allow them to return up this slope to Europe. From these divers prejudices concerning the nature, form, extent, ascents and descents, of the ocean, there resulted a general and mysterious dread, on which only enterprising minds would speculate in thought, and which none but superhuman boldness would venture to brave in ships. It would be a struggle between the mind of man and the illimitable sea; to attempt this, seemed to demand more than a mortal.

The unconquerable predilection of the poor geographer for this enterprise was the real cause

that detained Columbus so many years in Lisbon, the country of his thoughts. It was during the time that Portugal, governed by John the Second—an enlightened and enterprising prince, and imbued with the spirit of colonisation, commerce, and adventure—was making incessant attempts to connect Asia with Europe by sea, and when Vasco de Gama, the Portuguese colonist, was on the point of discovering the road to India round the Cape of Good Hope. Columbus, convinced that he should find a more open and direct road by dashing straightforward to the West, obtained, after repeated solicitations, an audience of the King, to whom he explained his plans of discovery, and applied for the means of accomplishing them, to the advantage and honour of his states. The King listened to him with interest; he did not think the stranger's faith in his hopes sufficiently devoid of foundation to be classed as chimerical. Columbus, besides natural eloquence, possessed the eloquence of earnest conviction. He induced the King to appoint a council composed of learned men and politicians, to examine the proposals of the Genoese navigator, and report upon the probability of its success. This council, consisting of the King's confessor and of some geographers who enjoyed all the more credit in the King's court from falling in with common prejudices, declared the ideas of



Columbus to be chimerical, and contrary to all the laws of nature and of religion.

A second board of examiners, to whom Columbus appealed by the King's permission, confirmed the previous decision. Nevertheless, with a perfidy to which the King was no party, they communicated the plans of Columbus to a pilot, and secretly sent a vessel to try the passage to Asia which he pointed out. This vessel, after cruising about for some days beyond the Azores, came back, with its crew frightened by the immensity of the void abyss, and confirmed the council in their contempt for the conjectures of Columbus.

Pending these fruitless solicitations at the Portuguese Court, the unfortunate Columbus had lost his wife, the love of his heart, and the consolation and encouragement of his thoughts. His fortune, neglected for these expectations of discovery, was ruined; his creditors seized the produce of his labour, even to his maps and globes, and actually threatened his liberty. Many years had thus been lost in expectation: his age was increasing, his child growing, and the extreme of misery was his only prospect, in place of the New World which he contemplated. He escaped by night from Lisbon, on foot, without any resources for his journey but chance hospitality; and sometimes leading his son Diego by the hand, sometimes carrying him on his stalwart shoulders, he


C

entered Spain, with the determination of offering to Ferdinand and Isabella, who then governed it, the continent or the empire which Portugal had refused.

It was during this tedious pilgrimage to the shifting quarters of the Spanish court, that he reached the gate of the convent of La Rabida, near Palos. He intended first to go to the little town of Huerta, in Andalusia, in which there lived a brother of his wife, with whom he was going to leave his son Diego; and then he would set forth alone to encounter delays, risks, and perhaps unbelief, at the court of Isabella and Ferdinand.

It has been said that, before going to Spain, he had thought it right, as an Italian, and a Genoese, to offer his discovery to Genoa, his country, first; and that he then offered it to the Venetian Senate; but that these two republics, occupied with ambitious projects and rivalries nearer home, had met his repeated applications with cold refusals.

The prior of the monastery of La Rabida was better versed in the sciences relating to his profession than was usual for a man of his class. His convent, within sight of the sea, and near the little port of Palos, then one of the busiest in Andalusia, had thrown the monk into habitual contact with the mariners and merchants of this little town, whose whole business was ship-



ping. During his residence in the capital, and at court, he had occupied himself with the study of the natural sciences, and of the problems which were then of interest. He first felt pity, and his daily conversations with Columbus soon produced enthusiasm and confidence, for a man who appeared so superior to his condition. He saw in him one of those sent by God, but thrust from the gates of cities and princes to whom their poverty brings the invisible treasures of truth. Religion understood genius—a species of revelation which, like the other, requires its believers. He felt disposed to be amongst those trusting few, who share in the revelations of genius, not by inventive talent, but by faith. Providence almost always sends to superior men one of these believers, to prevent their being discouraged by the incredulity, the harshness, or the persecutions, of the multitude. They exhibit friendship in its noblest form. They are the friends of disowned truth, believers in the impossible future.

Juan Perez felt himself predestined by Heaven, from the depth of his solitude, to introduce Columbus to the favour of Isabella, and to preach his great design to the world. What he loved in Columbus was not only the design, but the man himself; the beauty, energy, courage, modesty, gravity, eloquence, piety, virtue, softness, grace, patience, and misfortune nobly borne, revealing in

this stranger a disposition marked with innumerable perfections by that divine stamp which prevents our forgetting, and compels us to admire a truly great man. After his first conversation, the stranger won over, not only the opinion, but also the heart of the monk ; and, what was more strange, he never lost it. Columbus had gained a friend.

Juan Perez persuaded Columbus to accept, for some days, a refuge, or at least a resting-place for himself and his child, in the poor convent. During this short stay, the prior communicated to some of his friends and neighbours of Palos, the arrival and the adventures of his guest. He begged them to come to the convent to converse with the stranger upon his conjectures, his intentions, and his plans, in order to see how his theories agreed with the practical views of the seamen of Palos. An eminent man, and friend of the prior, the physician Fernandez, and a skilful pilot, Pedro de Velasco, spent, at his invitation, several evenings in the convent ; listened to Columbus, felt their eyes opened by his conversation ; entered into his plans with all the warmth of earnest minds and simple hearts ; and formed that first conclave, in which every new faith is hatched with the cognizance of a few proselytes, under the shadow of intimacy, solitude and mystery. Every great truth begins as a secret

amongst friends, before bursting forth brilliantly to the world: The first adherents won over to his belief by Columbus, in the cell of a poor monk, were perhaps dearer to him than the applause and enthusiasm of all Spain, when success had confirmed his predictions. The first believed on the faith of his word, the others only on seeing his discoveries ascertained.

The monk, confirmed in his opinion, and having tested his impressions by the science of the physician Fernandez, and the experience of the pilot Velasco, was more than ever charmed with his guest. He persuaded Columbus to leave the child in his care at the convent, to go to court to offer the discovery of the New World to Ferdinand and Isabella, and to ask those Sovereigns for the assistance necessary to carry out his plans. Chance made the poor monk a powerful patron and intercessor at the Spanish court. He had lived there long, had governed the conscience of Isabella, and, when his taste for retirement induced him to withdraw from the palace, he had kept up friendly relations with the new confessor whom he recommended to the Queen. The confessor, at that time keeper of the Sovereign's conscience, was Fernando de Talavera, superior of the monastery of the Prado, a man of merit, reputation, and virtue, to whom all the doors in the palace were open. Juan Perez gave Columbus

a strong letter of recommendation to Fernando de Talavera, and furnished him with the equipment necessary to appear decently at court,—a mule, a guide, and a purse of zecchins. Then, embracing him at the gates of the monastery, he recommended him and his designs to the care of the God who inspires, and the chances which favour great ideas.

Full of gratitude for the first generous friend, whose eyes and heart never quitted him, and to whom he always ascribed the origin of his good fortune, Columbus set out for Cordova, where the court then resided. He went with that confidence of success which is the illusion but also the guiding star of genius. It was not long before this illusion was to be dispelled, and the star to be overshadowed. The moment seemed badly chosen for the Genoese adventurer to offer a new world to the crown of Spain. Far from dreaming of conquering questionable possessions beyond unknown seas, Ferdinand and Isabella were occupied with the recovery of their own kingdom from the Moors in Spain. These Moslem conquerors of the Peninsula, after a long and prosperous occupation, saw snatched away from them, one by one, the towns and provinces which they had made their country. Vanquished everywhere despite their exploits, all that they now possessed were the mountains and valleys surrounding Granada, the capital and the wonder of their empire.

Ferdinand and Isabella employed all their power, all their efforts, and all the resources of their united kingdoms, to wrest from the Moors this citadel of Spain. United by a marriage of policy, by mutual affection, and by a glory shared by both alike, one had brought the kingdom of Arragon, and the other the crown of Castile to their double throne. But although the King and Queen had thus united their separate provinces into one country, each still retained a distinct and independent dominion over their hereditary kingdom. They had each a council and ministers, for the separate interests of their own subjects. These councils were only fused into one government on questions of common importance to the two states and the two sovereigns.

Nature seems to have endowed them with beauty, qualities, and excellencies of mind and body, different, but nearly equal; as if one was intended to supply what was wanting to the other for the conquests, the civilization, and prosperity, which were in store for them.

Ferdinand, a little older than Isabella, was a skilful warrior, and a consummate politician. Before the age when sad experience is teaching others to understand men, he could see through them. His only defect was a certain coldness and suspicion, arising from mistrust, and closing the heart to enthusiasm and magnanimity.

But these two virtues, in which he was to some extent wanting, were supplied to his councils by the tenderness and genius of the full-hearted Isabella. Young, beautiful, admired by all, adored by him, well educated, pious without superstition, eloquent, full of enthusiasm for great achievements, of admiration for great men, of faith in great ideas, she stamped on the mind and policy of Ferdinand the heroism which springs from the heart, and the love of the marvellous which arises from the imagination. She inspired—he executed. The one found her reward in the fame of her husband; the other, his glory in the affection of his wife. This double reign, destined to become of almost fabulous import in the annals of Spain, only awaited, in order to immortalize itself amongst all reigns, the arrival of the destitute foreigner who came to beg admittance within the palace of Cordova, with the letter of a poor friar in his hand.

This letter, read with prejudice and unbelief by the Queen's confessor, opened to Columbus a long vista of delay, exclusion, and discouragement. It is only in solitude and leisure that men give audience to bold ideas. Amidst the tumult of business and of courts, they have neither the kindness nor the time. Columbus was driven off from every door, as the historian Oviedo, his contemporary relates, "because he was a foreigner,

because he was poorly clad, and because he brought the courtiers and ministers no other recommendation than a letter from a Franciscan monk, long since forgotten at the court."

The King and Queen did not even hear of him. Isabella's confessor, either from indifference or contempt, completely belied the expectations Juan Perez had founded upon him. Columbus, with the obstinacy that arises from certainty biding its time, stayed at Cordova, to be near enough to watch for a favourable moment. After exhausting the scanty purse of his friend, the prior of La Rabida, he earned a slender livelihood by his trade in globes and maps, thus trifling with the images of the world which he was destined to conquer. His hard and patient life during many years, is but a tale of misery, labour, and blighted hope. Young in heart, however, and affectionate, he loved, and was beloved, in those years of trial; for a second son, Fernando, was about this time the offspring of a mysterious attachment, never sanctified by marriage, and of which he records the fact and the repentance in touching language in his will. He brought up this natural son with as much tenderness as his other son Diego.

His external grace and dignity, however, showed themselves, despite his humble profession. The distinguished characters with whom his scientific trade occasionally brought him into contact,

received of his person and conversation an impression of astonishment and attraction — the magnetic influence of a great mind in a lowly condition. His trade and conversation by degrees gained him friends in Cordova, and even at court. Amongst the friends whose names history has preserved, as associated by gratitude to the New World, are those of Alonzo de Quintanilla, high-treasurer of Isabella ; Geraldini, the tutor of the young princes, her children ; Antonio Geraldini, papal nuncio at Ferdinand's court ; and lastly Mendoza, Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo, who enjoyed such royal favour, that he was called the third king in Spain.

The Archbishop of Toledo—at first alarmed at these geographical novelties, which seemed, from a mistaken idea, to clash with the notions of celestial mechanics contained in the Bible—was soon quieted by the sincere and exalted piety of Columbus. He ceased to fear blasphemy in ideas which increase the proofs of the wisdom and greatness of God. Persuaded by the system, and delighted with the man, he obtained from his Sovereigns an audience for his protégé. After two years' expectation, Columbus appeared at this audience with the modesty becoming a poor foreigner, but yet with the confidence of a tributary who is bringing his masters more than they can give him in return. "Thinking on what I

was," he himself afterwards remarks, "I was overwhelmed with humility; but, thinking of what I brought, I felt myself on an equality with the two Crowns; I perceived that I was no longer my humble self, but the instrument of God, chosen and marked out for the accomplishment of a great design."

Ferdinand listened to Columbus with attention, Isabella with enthusiasm. From his first look and his first tones, she felt for this messenger of God an admiration amounting to fanaticism—an attraction which partook of affection. Nature had given to Columbus the personal recommendations which fascinate the eye, as well as the eloquence which persuades the mind. It might have been supposed that he was destined to have for his first apostle a queen; and that the truth with which he was to enrich his age, was to be first received and fostered in the heart of a woman. Isabella was that woman. Her constancy in favour of Columbus never wavered before the indifference of her court, before his enemies, or his reverses. She believed in him from the day she first saw him: she was his proselyte on the throne, and his friend even to the grave.

Ferdinand, after hearing Columbus, appointed a council of examination at Salamanca, under the presidency of Fernando de Talavera, prior of the Prado. This council consisted of the men the

most versed in divine and human knowledge in the two kingdoms. It assembled in this the literary capital of Spain, in the Dominican convent in which Columbus was received as a guest. At that time priests and monks managed everything in Spain. Civilization was of the sanctuary. Kings were only concerned with acts: ideas belonged to the priest. The inquisition—a sacerdotal police—watched, reached, and struck all that savoured of heresy, even at the foot of the throne.

To this council the King had added the professors of astronomy, of geography, of mathematics, and of all the sciences taught at Salamanca. The audience did not alarm Columbus. He expected to be tried by his peers, but he was only tried by his despisers. The first time he appeared in the great hall of the convent, the monks and so-called wise men, convinced beforehand that all theories surpassing their ignorance or their routine were but the dreams of a diseased or arrogant mind, saw in this obscure foreigner only an adventurer seeking his fortune by these chimeras. None deigned to listen to him, save two or three friars of the convent of St. Stephen of Salamanca, obscure monks without any influence, who devoted themselves in their cells to studies despised by the superior clergy. The other examiners of Columbus puzzled him by quotations from the

Bible, the prophets, the psalms, the Gospels, and the fathers of the Church; who demolished by anticipation, and by indisputable texts, the theory of the globe, and the absurd and impious idea of antipodes. Amongst others, Lactantius had expressed himself deliberately on this subject in a passage which was cited to Columbus: "Can anything be more absurd," Lactantius writes, "than to believe in the existence of antipodes having their feet opposed to ours—men who walk with their feet in the air and their heads down, in a part of the world where everything is topsy-turvy—the trees growing with their roots in the air, and their branches in the earth?" St. Augustine had gone further, branding with impiety the mere belief in antipodes: "For," he said, "it would involve the supposition of nations not descended from Adam. Now, the Bible says, that all men are descended from one and the same father." Other doctors, taking a poetical metaphor for a system of cosmogony, quoted to the geographer the verse of the psalm in which it is said that God spread the sky above the earth as a tent—from which it followed, they said, that the earth was flat.

In vain Columbus replied to his examiners with a piety which did not clash with nature; in vain, following them respectfully into the province of theology, he proved himself more religious and

more orthodox than they, because more intelligent and more reverent of the works of God. His eloquence, enhanced by truth, lost all its power and brilliancy amidst the wilful darkness of their obstinate ignorance. A few monks only appeared either doubtful or convinced that Columbus was right. Diego de Deza, a Dominican friar—a man beyond his age, and who afterwards became Archbishop of Toledo—ventured boldly to oppose the prejudices of the council, and to give the weight of his word and his influence to Columbus. Even this unexpected assistance could not overcome the indifference or obstinacy of the examiners. The conferences were many, without coming to a definite conclusion. They still lingered and avoided truth by delay, the last refuge of error. They were interrupted by a fresh contest of Ferdinand and Isabella with the Moors of Granada. Columbus—sorrowful, despised, put off, and dismissed, encouraged only by the favour of Isabella and the conversion of Diego de Deza to his views—followed in miserable plight the Court and the army, from camp to camp, and from town to town, waiting in vain for an hour's attention, which the din of war prevented him from receiving. The Queen, however, as faithful to him in her secret favour as fortune was cruel, continued to hope well of, and to protect, this disowned genius. She had a house or a tent

reserved for Columbus wherever the Court stopped. Her treasurer was instructed to provide for the learned foreigner—not as for an undesired guest who begs for hospitality, but as a distinguished stranger, who honours the kingdom by his presence, and whom the Sovereigns wish to retain in their service.

Thus passed several years, in the course of which the Kings of Portugal, England, and France, hearing through their ambassadors of this strange man who promised monarchs a new world, made overtures to Columbus to enter into their service. The deep gratitude he owed to Isabella, and his love for Donna Beatrice Enriquez of Cordova, already the mother of his second son, Fernando, made him reject these offers, and remain a follower of the Court. He reserved to the young Queen an empire in her return for her kindness to him. He was present at the siege and conquest of Granada. He saw Boabdil give up to Ferdinand and Isabella the keys of his capital, the palace of the Abencerrages, and the domes of the Alhambra. He took part in the procession which escorted the Spanish Sovereigns in their triumphal entry into this last refuge of Islam. He was already looking beyond the ramparts and valleys of Granada to fresh conquests, and other triumphal entries into vaster territories. Compared with the greatness of his ideas, everything seemed small.

The peace which followed this conquest, in 1492, caused a second assembly of examiners of his plans at Seville to give their advice to the Crown. This advice, long opposed, as at Salamanca, by Diego de Deza, was to reject the offer of the Genoese adventurer, if not as impious, at least as chimerical, and as compromising the dignity of the Spanish Crown, which could not undertake an enterprise on such slender prospects. Ferdinand, however, influenced by Isabella, in communicating this decision of the Council, softened its harshness, and gave him to understand that as soon as he was in quiet possession of Spain by the complete expulsion of the Moors, the Court would assist him with money and ships in this expedition of discovery and conquest for which he had pressed for so many years.

While waiting, without too sanguine hopes, the ever delayed accomplishment of the King's promises, and the sincere wishes of Isabella, Columbus tried to persuade two great Spanish nobles, the Dukes of Medina Sidonia, and Medina Celi, to carry out this enterprise at their own expense. Each possessed ports and ships on the Spanish coast. They first smiled at these prospects of glory and maritime possessions for their own families, and then abandoned them through incredulity or indifference. Envy preyed on Columbus, even before he had earned it by success: it per-

secuted him by anticipation and by instinct, even through his hopes; it contested with him even what it termed his follies. He again, with tears, gave up his endeavours. The unwillingness of the ministers to listen to him, the obstinacy of the priests in opposing his ideas as a scientific impiety, the vain promises and eternal delays of the Court, threw him, after six years' trial, into such discouragement, that he finally gave up all idea of again soliciting the government of Spain, and resolved to go and offer his undiscovered empire to the King of France, from whom he had already received overtures.

Ruined in fortune, disappointed in hope, worn out by delay, and heart-broken at the necessity of quitting Donna Beatrice, he again set out on foot from Cordova, without any views for the future, except to seek out his faithful friend, the prior Juan Perez, in the convent of Rabida. He intended to fetch his son Diego, whom he had left there, to bring him back to Cordova, and to place him, before leaving for France, under the care of Donna Beatrice, the mother of his natural son Fernando. The brothers, thus brought up together by the care of one woman, would love each other with a fraternal affection, the only inheritance he had to leave them.

Tears flowed from the eyes of the prior Juan Perez, at seeing his friend coming on foot, more

miserably clad than at first, to knock at the gate of the convent, sufficiently attesting, by the shabbiness of his clothes and the sadness of his face, the incredulity of men and the ruin of his hopes. But Providence had again hidden the key of Columbus's fortune in the bosom of friendship. The poor friar's faith in the truth and future discoveries of his protégé, instead of discouraging, made him bear up against it, with a kindly indignation at his disappointment. He embraced his guest, condoled and wept with him ; but soon, recalling all his energy and resolution, sent to Palos for the physician Fernandez, his old confidant in the mysterious projects of Columbus, Alonzo Pinzon, a rich seaman of that port, and Sebastian Rodriguez, a skillful pilot of Lepi. The ideas of Columbus, again unfolded before this little conclave of friends, raised the fanaticism of his audience still higher than before. They begged of him to stay and try his fortune again, and to reserve for Spain, though unbelieving and ungrateful, the glory of an enterprise unrivalled in history. Pinzon promised to assist with his wealth and his vessels, the equipment of this memorable flotilla, as soon as the Government should consent to sanction it. Juan Perez wrote, not now to the confessor, but to the Queen herself, to interest her conscience as much as her glory in an enterprise which would convert whole nations

from idolatry to religion. He spoke in the name of heaven and of earth : he drew warmth and persuasion from his desire for the greatness of his country and from his personal friendship. Columbus, thoroughly discouraged, refusing to take this letter to a Court of which he had so long experienced the delays and neglect, Rodriguez undertook to carry it himself to Granada, where the Court then resided. He set out, followed by the good wishes and prayers of the convent, and of the friends of Columbus at Palos. The fourteenth day after his departure, he came back in triumph to the monastery. The Queen had read the letter of Juan Perez, and while reading it, all her prepossessions in favour of the Genoese mariner had returned. She sent for the venerable prior to come instantly to her Court, and desired Columbus to await, at the convent of La Rabida, the return of the monk and the decision of the Council.

Juan Perez, delighted with his friend's good fortune, saddled his mule without losing an hour, and set out that same night, alone, to cross a country infested with Moors. He felt that in him Heaven protected the great design which he held in trust for his friend. He arrived : the gates of the palace were opened to him ; he saw the Queen, and aroused in her, by the strength of his own conviction, the faith and zeal which she herself felt for this great work. The Marchioness

of Maya, Isabella's favourite, interested herself from enthusiasm and pity in the holy friar's protégé. The hearts of two women, involved by the eloquence of a monk in the projects of an adventurer, triumphed over the opposition of the Court. Isabella sent Columbus a sum of money from her private treasury to purchase a mule and clothes, and directed him to come at once to Court. Juan Perez remained with her, to support his friend by his exertions and influence, and forwarded the news and the pecuniary succours to Rabida by a messenger, who gave the letter and the money to the physician, Fernandez of Palos, to be handed over to Columbus.

Having bought a mule and hired a servant, Columbus went to Granada, and was admitted to discuss his plans and requirements with the ministers of Ferdinand. "Then was seen," says an eye-witness, "an obscure and unknown follower of the Court, classed by the ministers of the two Crowns amongst the troublesome applicants, feeding his imagination in the corners of the ante-chambers with the magnificent project of discovering a new world; grave, melancholy, and depressed amidst the public rejoicing, he seemed to look with indifference upon the completion of the conquest of Granada, which filled with pride a nation and two courts. This man was Christopher Columbus!"

This time, the obstacles were raised by Columbus. Certain of the Continent which he offered Spain, he wished, even out of respect to the greatness of the gift he was about to make to the world and to his sovereigns, to obtain for himself and his descendants conditions worthy, not of his position, but of his work. If he had been wanting in proper pride, he would have thought himself wanting in faith in God and the worthiness of his mission. Poor, unsupported, and dismissed, he treated of possessions which he as yet only saw in thought, as if he had been a monarch. "A beggar," said Fernandez de Talavera, president of the Council, "stipulates with kings for royal conditions." He demanded the title and privileges of admiral, the rank and power of viceroy over all the lands which his discoveries might annex to Spain, and the perpetuity of a tithe, for himself and his descendants, of all the revenues of these possessions. "Singular demands for an adventurer," said his enemies in the Council: "they secure to him beforehand the command of a fleet, and, if he succeeds, an unlimited viceroyalty, while he undertakes nothing in case of failure, because, in his present poverty, he has nothing to lose."

These requirements at first excited astonishment, and at last indignation: he was offered conditions less burthensome to the Crown. Notwithstanding

his indigence and his misery, he refused all. Wearied, but not overcome, by eighteen years of expectation from the day that he had conceived his idea and offered it in vain to the Christian powers, he would have blushed to abate one jot of his price for the gift that God had given him. He respectfully retired from the conference with Ferdinand's commissioners, and mounting his mule, the gift of the Queen, alone and unprovided, he took the road to Cordova, to proceed from thence to France.

Isabella, hearing of her protégé's departure, seemed to have a presentiment that these great prospects were deserting her with this man of destiny. She was indignant at the commissioners, who, she said, were haggling with God for the price of an empire, and especially of millions of souls whom their fault would leave to idolatry. The Marchioness of Maya, and Quintanilla, Isabella's treasurer, shared and encouraged these feelings. The King, cooler and more calculating, hesitated : the expense of the undertaking, and an empty treasury, made him hold back. " Well ! " said Isabella, in a transport of generous enthusiasm, " I will undertake the enterprise alone, for my own crown of Castille. I will pawn my diamonds and jewels to meet the expenses of the expedition."

This womanly burst of feeling triumphed over

the King's economy, and, by a nobler estimate, acquired incalculable treasures in wealth and territory to the two kingdoms. Disinterestedness, inspired by enthusiasm, is the true economy of great minds, and the true wisdom of great politicians.

The steps of the fugitive were followed. The Queen's messenger overtook him a few leagues from Granada on the bridge of Pinos, in the famous defile where the Moors and Christians had so often mixed their blood in the torrent which separated the two races. Columbus, much moved, returned to the feet of Isabella. Her tears obtained from Ferdinand the ratification of his conditions. While serving the hopeless cause of this great man, she thought she was serving the cause of God himself, unknown to that part of the human race, which he was to bring over to the faith. She thought of the kingdom of heaven in the possessions which her favourite was to acquire for the empire. Ferdinand only saw the earthly kingdom. The champion of Christendom in Spain, and conqueror of the Moors, as many of the faithful as he brought over to the faith of Rome, so many subjects had the Pope added to his rule. The millions of men whom he was to rally round the Cross by the discoveries of this stranger, had been by anticipation given over to his exclusive dominion by the Court of Rome.

Every one, who was not a Christian, was in its eyes a slave as of right. Every portion of the human race, not stamped with the seal of Christianity, stood without the pale of humanity. It gave or exchanged them away in the name of its spiritual supremacy on earth and in heaven. Ferdinand was sufficiently credulous, and, at the same time, sufficiently cunning, to accept them.

The treaty between Ferdinand and Isabella, and this poor Genoese adventurer who had arrived in their capital on foot some years before, and had no other refuge than the hospitality of the convent porch, was signed in the plain of Granada, on the 17th of April, 1492. Isabella took upon herself, on behalf of her kingdom of Castile, all the expenses of the expedition. It was right that she, who had first believed in the enterprise, should encounter the greatest risk ; and it was also right that the glory and honour of success should be attached to her name rather than to any other. The little haven of Palos in Andalusia was assigned to Columbus as the place of equipment for his expedition, and the port from which his squadron was to sail. The idea conceived at the convent of La Rabida, near Palos, by Juan Perez and his friends, in their first interview with Columbus, thus returned to the place of its birth. The prior of the convent was to take charge of the arrangements, and to see from his retreat the first sails of

his friend spread for that new world which they had both beheld with the eye of genius and of faith.

Numberless unforeseen impediments, to all appearance insurmountable, now crossed the favours of Isabella, and the fulfilment of Ferdinand's promises. The royal treasury was short of money. Vessels were leaving the Spanish ports on more urgent expeditions. The seamen refused to engage for so long and mysterious a voyage, or deserted after enlistment. The towns of the sea-coast, ordered by the Court to supply the vessels, hesitated to obey, and unriggered their ships, which were commonly considered as devoted to certain destruction. Unbelief, fear, envy, ridicule, avarice, and even mutiny, again and again rendered useless to Columbus, even in spite of the royal officers, the means of equipment which the favour of Isabella had placed at his disposal. It seemed as though some evil genius, obstinately struggling against the genius of the world's unity, tried to keep separate for ever these two continents which the mind of one man wished to unite.

Columbus superintended everything from the monastery of La Rabida, where he was again the guest of his friend the prior, Juan Perez. Without the intervention and influence of the poor monk the expedition would again have failed. The orders of the Court were powerless and disobeyed.

The monk had recourse to his friends at Palos. They yielded to his conviction, his entreaties, and his advice. Three brothers, wealthy mariners at Palos, the Pinzons, were at last imbued with the faith and spirit which inspired the friend of Columbus. They imagined they heard the voice of God in that old man. They volunteered to join in the undertaking : they found the money, they equipped three vessels of the kind then called *Caravellas*, hired seamen in the little harbours of Palos and Moguer, and, in order to give an impulse and an example of courage to their sailors, two of the three brothers, Martin Alonzo Pinzon, and Vincent Yanes Pinzon, resolved to embark and to take command in person of their own vessels. Thanks to this generous assistance from the Pinzons, three ships, or rather boats, the *Santa Maria*, the *Pinta*, and the *Nina*, were ready to put to sea on Friday the 3d of August, 1492.

At break of day, Columbus, escorted down to the shore by the prior and monks of the convent of La Rabida, who blessed the sea and his vessels, embraced his son, whom he left under the care of Juan Perez, and embarked in the largest of his three barks, the *Santa Maria*, on board of which he hoisted his flag as admiral of an unknown sea, and viceroy of undiscovered lands. The people of the two harbours and of the coast came down

to the shore in crowds to be present at their departure on a voyage from which it was commonly supposed that there would be no return. It was a mourning procession rather than an augury of a happy result : there was more sorrow than hope, more tears than hurrahs. The mothers, wives, and sisters of the seamen, secretly cursed the fatal stranger, whose enchanted words had seduced the mind of the Queen, and who risked so many men's lives on the accomplishment of a dream. Columbus, unwillingly followed, like all men who lead a nation beyond the pale of its prejudices, launched upon the unknown expanse amidst maledictions and complaints. Such is the law of human nature. All that surpasses humanity, even to conquer an idea, a truth, or a world, makes it complain. Man is like the ocean, with a restlessness tending to movement, and an inertia inclining to repose. From these two opposite tendencies arises the equilibrium of his nature. Woe to him that disturbs it !

The appearance of this little flotilla, scarcely equal to a fishing or coasting squadron, offered a strong contrast in the people's eye to the magnitude of the dangers it was so rashly going to brave. Of the three vessels, only one was decked, that on board of which he himself was ; a crank and narrow trading craft, already very old and weather-beaten. The others were open boats, which a


heavy breaker might have swamped. But the poop and forecastle of these vessels, raised high out of the water like the ancient galleys, had two half decks, under which the sailors could find shelter in bad weather, and would prevent the caravella from foundering if she shipped a sea. They had two masts, one amidships, and the other aft. On the foremast they carried one great square sail, and on the other a triangular latteen sail. In calm weather, long sweeps, used but seldom and then with difficulty, fixed in the low gunwale of the caravella's waist, could, in case of need, give slow motion to the vessel. These three ships of unequal size, contained the 120 men of whom the crews were composed. He alone went on board with a calm face, a firm countenance, and a courageous heart. His conjectures had assumed in his mind, after the lapse of eighteen years, the shape of certainty. Although he was even then past the term of middle life, being in his fifty-seventh year, he looked upon the years that had gone by as though they were nothing. In his idea, all his life was to come. He felt the youthfulness of hope and his future immortality. As if to take possession of those worlds for which he spread his sails, he wrote and published before embarking, a solemn account of all the vicissitudes his mind and fortunes had passed through up to that period, in the conception and execution of his design ; he

added an enumeration of all the titles, honours, and dignities, with which he had been invested by his sovereigns in respect of his future possessions; and he invoked God and man to support his faith and bear witness to his constancy. "And it is for this purpose," he says, in concluding his proclamation to the old and new worlds, "that I have determined never to sleep during this navigation, and until these things shall have been accomplished."

A favourable wind from Europe wafted them towards the Canaries, the last resting-place of those who sailed into the Atlantic. Although he gave thanks to God for these auguries which calmed the minds of his crew, he would have preferred that a gale had swept him in full sail out of the beaten track of vessels. He feared, with reason, that the sight of land so far from Spain, might recal the fond idea of home to the minds and hearts of his sailors who had hesitated to embark. In momentous enterprises, no time must be given to men for reflection, and no opportunity for repentance. Columbus knew this, and he burned to pass the limits of the well-known waters, and to lock in his own breast the possibility of returning, and the secret of the track, of his charts and his compass. His impatience to lose sight of the coasts of the old world was but too well-founded. One of his ships, the *Pinta*,

which had the rudder broken and leaked in the hold, obliged him, much against his inclination, to put into the Canaries to change this vessel for another. He lost three weeks in these ports, without being able to find any craft fit for his long voyage. All he could do was to repair the *Pinta's* damage, and procure a new sail for the *Nina*, his third vessel, a heavy and slow sailer which delayed his voyage. He took in fresh provisions and water, for the small stowage in his open vessels only allowed him to carry victuals for his crews, of 120 men, for a limited number of days.


On quitting the Canaries, the appearance of the Peak of Teneriffe, whose eruption illumined the heavens, and was reflected in the sea, cast terror into the minds of his seamen. They thought they saw in it the flaming sword of the angel who expelled the first man from Eden, driving back the children of Adam from the entrance to the forbidden seas and lands. The admiral passed from ship to ship to dispel this general panic, and to explain scientifically to these simple people, the physical laws of the phenomenon. But the disappearance of the volcano's peak, as it sank below the horizon, caused them as much sadness as the eruption had caused them fright. It was their last beacon, the farthest sea-mark, of the old world. Losing sight of it seemed to be losing the



last traces of their road through immeasurable space. They felt as if they were detached from earth, and sailing in the atmosphere of a new planet. They were seized with a general prostration of mind and body, like spectres who have lost even their tombs. The admiral again called them round him in his own ship, infusing his own energy into their minds; and giving way, like the prophet of the future, to the inspiring eloquence of his hopes, he described to them, as if he had already beheld them, the lands, the islands, the seas, the kingdoms, the riches, the vegetation, the sunshine, the mines of gold, the sands covered with pearls, the mountains shining with precious stones, the plains loaded with spice, that to his mind's eye already loomed in sight, beyond the expanse of which each wave carried them nearer to these wonders and enjoyments. These images, tinged with the brilliant colours of their leader's rich imagination, infused hope and spirit into their discouraged minds; and the trade-winds, blowing constantly and gently from the east, seemed to second the impatience of the seamen. The distance alone could now terrify them. To deceive them as to the space across which he was hurrying, Columbus used to subtract a certain number of leagues from his reckoning, and made his pilots and seamen think they had gone only half the distance they had actually traversed.

Privately, and for himself alone, he noted the true reckoning, in order that he alone might know the number of waves he had crossed and the track of his path, which he wished to keep unknown to his rivals. And, indeed, the crews, deceived by the steadiness of the wind, and the long roll of the waves, thought they were slowly crossing the farthest seas of Europe.

He would also have wished to conceal from them a new phenomenon, which began to disconcert his own science, at about 200 leagues from Teneriffe. It was the variation of the magnetic compass, his last, and, as he thought, his infallible guide, but which now began to vacillate before its approach to an untracked hemisphere. For several days he kept to himself this terrible doubt; but the pilots, who watched the binnacle as closely as he did himself, soon discovered this variation. Seized with the same astonishment as their chief, but less firm in their resolution to brave even Nature itself, they imagined that the very elements were troubled, or changed the laws of their existence, on the verge of infinite space. The supposed giddiness of Nature affected their minds. The evil tidings passed from one pale face to another, and they left their vessels to the direction of the winds and waves, now the only guides that remained. The hesitation of the pilots paralysed all the sailors.



Columbus, who endeavoured in vain to explain to himself a mystery of which science still seeks the cause, had again recourse to his fertile imagination, the internal guide with which nature had endowed him. He invented an explanation, false, but specious enough to uneducated minds, of the variation of the magnetic needle. He attributed it to new stars revolving round the pole, whose alternating motion in the sky was followed by the compass. This explanation, according with the astrological notions of the day, satisfied the pilots, and their credulity renewed the faith of the sailors. The sight of a heron, and of a tropical bird, which came next day, and flew round the masts of the squadron, acted upon their senses, as the admiral's explanation had swayed their minds. These two inhabitants of the earth could not live on an ocean where there were no trees, no verdure, and no fresh water. They appeared two witnesses who came to confirm by ocular demonstration the reasoning of Columbus. They sailed with more courage, on the faith of these birds. The mild, equable, and serene climate of this part of the ocean, the clearness of the sky, the transparency of the waves, the dolphins playing across their bows, the warmth of the air, the perfumes which the waves brought from afar, and seemed to exhale from their foam, the greater brilliancy of the stars and constella-

tions by night, — everything in these latitudes seemed to breathe a feeling of serenity, bringing conviction to their minds. They felt the presentiment of the still invisible world. They recalled the bright days, the clear stars, and the shining nights of an Andalusian spring. "It only wanted the nightingale," says Columbus.

The sea also began to bring its warnings. Unknown vegetations were often seen floating on its surface. Some, as the historians of this first voyage across the Atlantic relate, were marine substances, which only grow on the shallows near the coast; some were rock plants, that had been swept off the cliffs by the waves; some were fresh-water plants; and others, recently torn from their roots, were still full of sap; one of them carried a live crab—a little sailor afloat on a tuft of grass. These plants and living creatures could not have passed many days in the water without fading and dying. One of those birds, which never settle on the waves, or sleep on the waters, crossed the sky. Whence came he? Where was he going? And could the place of his rest be far off? Further on, the sea changed its temperature and its colour, a proof of an uneven bottom. Elsewhere it resembled immense meadows, and the prow cut its way but slowly amongst its weed-strewn waves. At eve and morning, the distant, waning clouds, like those which gather

round the mountain tops, took the form of cliffs and hills skirting the horizon. The cry of land was on the tip of every tongue. Columbus was unwilling either to confirm or entirely to extinguish these hopes, which served his purpose by encouraging his companions. But he thought himself still only 300 leagues from Teneriffe, and he calculated that he had 700 or 800 more to go, before he should reach the land he sought for.

Nevertheless, he kept his conjectures to himself; finding amongst his companions no friend whose heart was firm enough to support his resolution, or sufficiently safe to entrust with his secret fears. During the long passage he conversed only with his own thoughts, with the stars, and with God, whom he felt to be his protector. Almost without sleep, as he undertook to be in his farewell proclamation to the Old World, he occupied the days in his after-cabin, noting down, in characters intelligible to none but himself, the degrees of latitude, and the space which he thought he had traversed. The nights he passed on deck with his pilots, studying the stars, and watching the sea. Alone, like Moses conducting the people of God in the desert, his thoughtful gravity impressed upon his companions, sometimes respect, and sometimes a mistrust and awe that kept them aloof,—an isolation or distant bearing generally observable in men superior to their fellows in

conception and determination, whether it be that the inspired genius requires more solitude and quiet for reflection, or whether the inferior minds whom they overawe, fear to approach too near them, lest they may invite a comparison, and be made to feel their littleness, as contrasted with the great men of the earth.

The land, so often pointed out, was seen to be only a mirage deceiving the sailors. Each morning the bows of the vessels plunged through the fantastic horizon, which the evening mist had made them mistake for a shore. They kept rolling on through the boundless and bottomless abyss. The very regularity and steadiness of the east wind which drove them on, without their having had to shift their sails once in so many days, was to them a source of anxiety. They fancied that this wind prevailed eternally in this region of the great ocean which encircled the world, and that after carrying them on so easily to the westward, it would be an insurmountable obstacle to their return. How should they ever get back against this current of contrary wind, but by beating across the immense space? And, if they had to make endless tacks to reach the shores of the Old World, how would their provisions and water, already half-consumed, hold out through the long months of their return-voyage? Who could save them from the horrible prospect of

dying of hunger and thirst in this long contest with the winds which drove them from their ports? Several already began to count the number of days, and the rations fewer than the days, and they murmured against the fruitless obstinacy of their chief, and blamed themselves secretly for persevering in an obedience which sacrificed the lives of 120 men to the madness of one.

But each time that the murmurs threatened to break out into mutiny, Providence seemed to send them more convincing and more unexpected signs, which changed their complaints to hope. Thus, on the 30th September, these favourable breezes, whose steadiness caused such alarm, veered round to the south-west. The sailors hailed this change, though opposed to their course, as a sign of life and motion in the elements, which made them feel the wind stirring in their sails. At evening, little birds, of the most delicate species, that build their nests in the shrubs of the garden and orchard, hovered warbling about their masts. Their delicate wings and joyous notes bore no marks of weariness or fright, as of birds swept far away to sea by a storm. Their song, like those which the sailors used to hear amidst the groves of myrtles, and orange-trees of their Andalusian home, reminded them of their country, and invited them to the now neighbouring shore. They recognised sparrows, which always dwell beneath the roof of

man. The green weed on the surface of the waves looked like the waving corn before the ear is ripe. The vegetation beneath the water seemed the forerunner of land, and delighted the eyes of the sailors, tired of the endless expanse of blue. But it soon became so thick that they were afraid of entangling their rudders and keels, and of remaining prisoners in the forests of ocean, as the ships of the northern seas are shut in by the ice. Thus each joy soon changed to fear, so terrible to man is the unknown. Columbus, like a guide seeking his way amidst the mysteries of the ocean, was obliged to appear to understand what surprised himself, and to invent an explanation for every cause that astonished his seamen.

The calms of the tropics alarmed them. If all things, including even the wind, perished in these latitudes, whence should spring up the breeze to fill their sails and move their vessels? The sea suddenly rose without wind: they ascribed it to submarine convulsions at the bottom. An immense whale was seen sleeping on the waters: they fancied there were monsters which would devour their ships. The roll of the waves drove them upon currents which they could not stem for want of wind: they imagined they were approaching the cataracts of the ocean, and that they were being hurried towards the abysses into which the deluge had poured its world of waters. Fierce

and angry faces crowded round the mast ; the murmurs rose louder and louder ; they talked of compelling the pilots to put about, and of throwing the Admiral into the sea, as a madman who left his companions no choice but between suicide and murder. Columbus, to whom their looks and threats revealed these plans, defied them by his bold bearing, or disconcerted them by his coolness.

Nature at length came to his assistance, by giving him fresh breezes from the east, and a calm sea under his bows. Before the close of day, Alonzo Pinzon, in command of the *Pinta*, which was sailing sufficiently near the Admiral to hail him, gave the first cry of "Land ho !" from his lofty poop. All the crews, repeating this cry of safety, life, and triumph, fell on their knees on the decks, and struck up the hymn, "Glory be to God in heaven and upon earth."

This religious chant, the first hymn that ever rose to the Creator from the bosom of the new ocean, rolled slowly over the waves. When it was over, all climbed as high as they could up the masts, yards, and rigging, to see with their own eyes the shore which Pinzon had discovered to the south-west. Columbus alone doubted ; but he was too willing to believe, to think of contradicting the fond hopes of his crews. Although he himself only expected to find land to the westward,

he allowed them to steer south through the night, to please his companions, rather than lose the temporary popularity caused by their illusion. The sunrise destroyed it but too quickly. The imaginary land of Pinzon disappeared with the morning mist, and the Admiral resumed his course to the westward.

END OF PART I.





Christopher Columbus.



PART II.



Again the surface of the sea was still, and the unclouded sun was shining on it as brightly as in the blue sky above. The rippling waves were foaming round the bows. Numberless dolphins were bounding in their wake. The water was full of life; the flying-fish leaped from their element, and fell on the decks of the ships. Everything in nature seemed to combine with the efforts of Columbus in raising the returning hopes of his sailors, who almost forgot how the days passed. On the 1st of October, they thought they were only 600 leagues beyond the usual track of ships; but the secret reckoning of the Admiral gave more than 800. The signs of approaching land became more frequent around

them, yet none loomed in the horizon. Terror again took possession of the crews. Columbus, himself, notwithstanding his apparent calmness, felt some anxiety. He feared lest he might have passed amongst the isles of an archipelago without seeing them, and have left behind him the extremity of that Asia which he sought, to wander in another ocean.

The lightest vessel of his squadron, the *Nina*, which led the way, at length, on the 7th of October, hoisted the signal of land in sight, and fired a cannon to announce the new world. On nearing it, they found that the *Nina* had been deceived by a cloud. The wind, which dispersed it, scattered their fond hopes, and converted them to fear. Nothing wearies the heart of man so much as these alternations of hope and bitter disappointment. They are the sarcasms of fortune. Reproaches against the Admiral were heard from all quarters. It was now no longer for their fatigues and difficulties that they accused him, but for their lives hopelessly sacrificed: their bread and water were beginning to fail.

Columbus, disconcerted by the immensity of this space, of which he had hoped already to have reached the boundary, abandoned the ideal route he had traced upon the map, and followed for two days and nights the flight of the birds, heavenly pilots seemingly sent to him by Providence when

human science was beginning to fail. The instinct of these birds, he reasoned, would not direct them all towards one point in the horizon, if they did not see land there. But even the very birds seemed to the sailors to join with the expanse of ocean, and the treacherous stars, to sport with their vessels and their lives. At the end of the third day, the pilots, going up to the shrouds when the setting sun shows the most distant horizon, beheld him sink into the same waves from whence he had risen in vain for so many mornings. They believed in the infinite expanse of waters. The despair which depressed them changed to fury. What terms had they now to keep with a chief who had deceived the Court of Spain, and whose titles and authority, fraudulently obtained from his sovereigns, were about to perish with him and his expectations? Would not following him further make them the accomplices of his guilt? Did the duty of obedience extend beyond the limits of the world? Was there any other hope, if even that now remained, but to turn the heads of their ships to Europe, and to beat back against the winds that had favoured the Admiral, whom they would chain to the mast of his own vessel as a mark for their dying curses, if they were to die, or give him up to the vengeance of Spain, if they were ever permitted to see again the ports of their country?

These complaints had now become clamorous. The Admiral restrained them by the calmness of his countenance. He reminded the mutineers of the authority, sacred to a subject, with which their sovereigns had invested him. He called upon Heaven itself to decide between him and them. He flinched not : he offered his life as the pledge of his promises ; but he asked them with the spirit of a prophet who sees himself what the vulgar only see through him, to suspend for three days their unbelief and their determination to put back. He swore a rash, but necessary oath, that if, in the course of the third day, land was not visible on the horizon, he would yield to their wishes and steer for Europe. The signs of the neighbourhood of a continent or islands were so obvious to the Admiral, that, in begging these three days from his mutinous crew, he felt certain of being able to attain his end. He tempted God by fixing a limit to his revelation ; but he had to manage men. These men reluctantly allowed him the three days, and God, who inspired him, did not punish him for having hoped much.

At sunrise on the second day, some rushes recently torn up were seen around the vessels. A plank evidently hewn by an axe, a stick skilfully carved by some cutting instrument, bough of hawthorn in blossom ; and lastly, a bird's nest built on a branch which the wind had broken, and full of eggs, on

which the parent bird was sitting amidst the gently rolling waves, were seen floating past on the waters. The sailors brought on board these living and inanimate witnesses of their approach to land. They were a voice from the shore, confirming the assurances of Columbus. Before the land actually appeared in sight, its neighbourhood was inferred from these marks of life. The mutineers fell on their knees to the Admiral whom they had insulted but the day before, craved pardon for their mistrust, and struck up a hymn of thanksgiving to God for associating them with his triumph.

Night fell on these songs of the Church welcoming a new world. The Admiral gave orders that the sails should be close reefed, and the lead kept going; and that they should sail slowly, being afraid of breakers and shoals, and feeling certain that the first gleam of daybreak would discover land under their bows. On that last anxious night none slept. Impatient expectation had removed all heaviness from their eyes; the pilots and the seamen, clinging about the masts, yards, and shrouds, each tried to keep the best place and the closest watch to get the earliest sight of the new hemisphere. The Admiral had offered a reward to the first who should cry land, provided his announcement was verified by its actual discovery. Providence, however, reserved to

Columbus himself this first glimpse, which he had purchased at the expense of twenty years of his life, and of untiring perseverance amidst such dangers. While walking the quarter-deck alone at midnight, and sweeping the dark horizon with his keen eye, a gleam of fire passed and disappeared, and again showed itself on the level of the waves. Fearful of being deceived by the phosphorescence of the sea, he quietly called a Spanish gentleman of Isabella's Court, named Guttierrez, in whom he had more confidence than in the pilots, pointed out the direction in which he had seen the light, and asked him whether he could discern anything there. Guttierrez replied that he did indeed see a flickering light in that quarter. To make still more sure, Columbus called Rodrigo Sanchez of Segovia, another in whom he had confidence. Sanchez had no more hesitation than Guttierrez in pronouncing that there was a light on the horizon. But the blaze was hardly seen before it again disappeared in the ocean, to show itself anew the next moment, whether it was the light of a fire on a low shore alternately appearing and disappearing beyond the broken horizon, or whether it was the floating beacon of a fisherman's boat now rising on the waves and now sinking in the trough of the sea. Thus both land and safety appeared together in the shape of fire to Columbus and his two friends,

on the night between the 11th and 12th of October, 1492. The Admiral enjoining silence to Rodrigo and Gutierrez, kept his observation to himself, for fear of again raising false hopes, and giving a bitter disappointment to his ship's companies. He lost sight of the light and remained on deck until two in the morning, praying, hoping, and despairing alone, awaiting the triumph or the return on which the morrow was to decide.

He was seized with that anguish which precedes the great discoveries of truth, like the struggle which anticipates the liberation of the soul by death, when a cannon shot, sounding over the sea a few hundred yards in advance of him, burst upon his ear; the announcement of a new-born world, which made him tremble and fall upon his knees. It was the signal of land in sight! made by firing a shot, as had been arranged with the *Pinta*, which was sailing in advance of the squadron, to guide their course and take soundings. At this signal a general shout of "Land ho!" arose from all the yards and rigging of the ships. The sails were furled, and daybreak was anxiously awaited. The mystery of the ocean had breathed its first whisper in the bosom of night. Daybreak would clear it up openly to every eye. Delicious and unknown perfumes reached the vessels from the dim outline of the shore, with the roar of the waves upon the reefs and the soft land breeze.

The fire seen by Columbus indicated the presence of man and of the first element of civilization. Never did the night appear so long in clearing away from the horizon ; for this horizon was to Columbus and his companions a second creation of God.

The dawn, as it spread over the sky, gradually raised the shores of an island from the waves. Its distant extremities were lost in the morning mist. It ascended gradually, like an amphitheatre, from the low beach to the summit of the hills, whose dark-green covering contrasted strongly with the clear blue of the heavens. Within a few paces of the foam of the waves breaking on the yellow sand, forests of tall and unknown trees stretched away, one above another, over the successive terraces of the island. Green valleys and bright clefts in the hollows, afforded a half glimpse into these mysterious wilds. Here and there could be discovered a few scattered huts, which, with their outlines and roofs of dry leaves, looked like beehives, and thin columns of blue smoke rose above the tops of the trees. Half-naked groups of men, women, and children, more astonished than frightened, appeared amongst the thickets near the shore, advancing timidly, and then drawing back, exhibiting, by their gestures and demeanour, as much fear as curiosity and wonder, at the sight of these strange vessels, which the previous night had brought to their shores.



Columbus, after gazing in silence on this foremost shore of the land so often determined by his calculations, and so magnificently coloured by his imagination, found it to exceed even his own expectations. He burned with impatience to be the first European to set foot on the sand, and to plant the Cross and the flag of Spain,—the standard of the conquest of God and of his sovereigns, effected by his genius. But he restrained the eagerness of himself and his crew to land, being desirous of giving to the act of taking possession of a new world, a solemnity worthy of the greatest deed, perhaps, ever accomplished by a seaman; and, in default of men, to call God and his angels, sea, earth, and sky, as witnesses of his conquest of an unknown hemisphere.

He put on all the insignia of his dignities as Admiral of the Ocean, and viceroy of these future realms; he wrapped himself in his purple cloak, and, taking in his hand a flag embroidered with a cross, in which the initials of Ferdinand and Isabella were interlaced like their two kingdoms, and surmounted by a crown, he entered his boat, and pulled towards the shore, followed by the boats of Alonzo and Yanès Pinzon, his two lieutenants. On landing, he fell on his knees, to acknowledge, by this act of humility and worship, the goodness and greatness of God in this new sphere of his works. He kissed the ground, and,

with his face on the earth, he wept tears of a double import and of a double meaning, as they fell on the dust of this hemisphere now for the first time visited by Europeans—tears of joy for Columbus; the overflowing of a proud spirit, grateful and pious, — tears of sadness for this virgin soil, seeming to foreshadow the calamities and devastation, with fire and sword, and blood and destruction, which the strangers were to bring with their pride, their knowledge, and their power. It was the man that shed these tears; but it was the earth that was destined to weep.

“Almighty and eternal God,” said Columbus, as he raised his forehead from the dust, with a Latin prayer which his companions have handed down to us, “who by the energy of thy creative word hast made the firmament, the earth and sea; blessed and glorified be thy name in all places! May thy majesty and dominion be exalted for ever and ever, as Thou hast permitted Thy holy name to be made known and spread by the most humble of thy servants in this hitherto unknown portion of Thy empire.”

He then baptized this land with the name of Christ—the island of *San Salvador*.

His lieutenants, his pilots, and his seamen, full of gladness, and impressed with a superstitious respect for him whose glance had pierced beyond the visible horizon, and whom they had offended

by their unbelief,—overcome by the evidence of their eyes, and by that mental superiority which overawes the minds of men, fell at the feet of the Admiral, kissed his hands and his clothes, and recognised for a moment the power and the almost divine nature of genius; yesterday the victims of his obstinacy—now the companions of his success, and sharers in the glory which they had mocked. Such is humanity, persecuting discoverers, yet reaping the fruits of their inventions.

During the ceremony of taking possession, the inhabitants of the island, first kept at a distance by fear, afterwards attracted by that instinctive curiosity which forms the first connexion between man and man, had drawn near. They were talking with each other about the wonderful events of the night and morning. These vessels, working their sails, masts, and yards, like huge limbs opening and closing at will, seemed to them animated and supernatural beings, descended during the night from the crystal firmament which surrounded their horizon, inhabitants of heaven floating on their wings, and settling upon the shores of which they were the tutelar deities. Struck with respect at the sight of the boats landing on their island, and of men in brilliant clothing, and covered with armour gleaming in the sun, they at last came close, as if fascinated by almighty power. They worshipped and adored

them with the simplicity of children, unsuspicious of the approach of evil under a pleasing appearance. The Spaniards, on examining them, were in their turn astonished at not finding in these islanders any of the physical characteristics, or even the colour, of the African, Asiatic, or European races with which they usually came in contact. Their copper complexion, their lank hair falling loose over their shoulders, their eyes dark as their sea, their delicate and almost feminine features, their open and confiding countenances, and lastly their nakedness, and the coloured patterns with which they stained their skins, marked them as a race completely distinct from any of the human families spread over the ancient hemisphere; a race still preserving the simplicity and the gentleness of infancy, lost for centuries in this unknown portion of the world, and retaining, through sheer ignorance of wrong, the mildness, truthfulness, and innocence of the world's youth.

Columbus, satisfied that this island was but an outpost of India, towards which he still thought he was sailing, gave them the imaginary name of Indians, which they retained until their extermination; the verbal error having lasted long after the physical mistake was explained.

The Indians, soon becoming accustomed to their stranger-guests, showed them their springs,



their houses, their villages, and their names, and brought them as offerings their cotton, and their maize meal, which represented the provisions of the Spaniards, and some ornaments of pure gold, which they wore in their ears and nostrils, as as bracelets, necklaces, or armbands amongst the women. They were ignorant of commerce or of the use of money, that necessary and indispensable substitute for the want of hospitality, and they were delighted to receive the richest trifles from the Europeans in exchange for their valuables. In their eyes, novelty was value. *Zoro* and *precious* are equivalent words in all countries. The Spaniards, who sought the country of gold and precious stones, asked by signs whence this metal came. The Indians pointed to the south : the Admiral and his companions understood them to mean that in that direction there was an island or continent of India, corresponding by its riches and its arts with the wonders related by the Venetian Marco Polo. The land which they now thought themselves near, was, they supposed, the fabulous island of Zipangu, or Japan, the sovereign of which walked on a pavement of gold. Their impatience to resume their course towards this object of their imagination or of their covetousness, made them return quickly to their ships. They had supplied themselves with water from the springs of the island, and their decks were loaded

with fruit, cassava cakes, and roots, which the poor but happy Indians had given them. They took one of the aborigines with them to learn their language, and to act as interpreter.

On getting clear of the island of San Salvador, they found themselves as it were lost in the channels of an archipelago, composed of more than a hundred isles of various sizes, but all with an appearance of the most luxurious freshness and fertility of vegetation. They landed on the largest and most populous. They were surrounded by canoes, hollowed from the trunk of a single tree; they traded with the inhabitants, exchanging buttons and trinkets. Their navigation and their stoppages amidst this labyrinth of islands, were but a repetition of the scene at their landing at San Salvador. They were everywhere received with the same inoffensive curiosity. They were enchanted with the climate, the flowers, the perfumes, the colours, and the plumages of unknown birds, which each of these oases of the ocean offered to their senses; but their minds, impressed with the sole idea of discovering the land of gold at what they supposed to be the extremity of Asia, rendered them less attentive to these natural treasures, and prevented their suspecting the existence of the new and immense continent, of which these isles were the outposts on the sea. Guided by the signs and looks of the Indians, who

pointed out to him a region still more splendid than their own archipelago, Columbus steered for the coast of Cuba, where he landed after three days' pleasant sailing, without losing sight of the beautiful Bahamas which enamelled his path.

Cuba, with its long terraces stretching away into the far distance, and backed by cloud-piercing mountains, with its havens, estuaries, gulfs, bays, forests, and villages, reminded him, on a more majestic scale, of Sicily. He was uncertain whether it was a continent or an island. He cast anchor in a shady bosom of a mighty river, and, going ashore, strolled about the shores and forests, the groves of oranges and palm-trees, and the villages and dwellings of the inhabitants. A dumb dog was the only living thing he found in these huts, which had been abandoned at his approach. He re-embarked, and ascended the river, shaded by broad-leaved palms, and gigantic trees bearing both fruit and flowers. Nature seemed to have bestowed, of her own accord, and without labour, the necessities of life, and happiness without work, on these fortunate races. Everything reminded them of the Eden of Holy Writ. Harmless animals, birds with azure and purple plumage, parrots, macaws, and birds of paradise, shrieked and sang, or flew in coloured clouds from branch to branch; luminous insects lighted the air by night; the sun, softened by the

breeze of the mountain, the shade of the trees, and the coolness of the water, fertilized everything without scorching; the moon and stars were reflected in the river with a mild light which took away the terror of darkness. A general enthusiasm had seized upon the minds and senses of Columbus and his companions; they felt that they had reached a new country, more fresh and yet more fruitful than the old land which they had left behind. "It is the most beautiful isle," says Columbus, in his notes, "that ever the eye of man beheld. One would wish to live there always. It is impossible to think of misery or death in such a place."

The scent of the spices which reached his vessels from the interior, and his meeting with pearl oysters on the coast, satisfied him more and more that Cuba was a continuation of Asia. He fancied that beyond the mountains of this continent or island (for he was still uncertain whether Cuba was or was not a portion of the main-land,) he should find the empires, the civilization, the gold mines, and the wonders which enthusiastic travellers had attributed to Cathay and Japan. Being unable to seize any of the natives, who all fled the coast on the approach of the Spaniards, he sent two of his companions, one of who spoke Hebrew and the other Arabic, to look for the fabulous cities in which he supposed the sovereign

of Cathay to dwell. These envoys were loaded with presents for the inhabitants. They had orders to exchange them for nothing but gold, of which they thought there were inexhaustible treasures in the interior.

The messengers returned to the ships without having discovered any other capital than huts of savages and an immense wilderness of vegetation, perfumes, fruits, and flowers. They had succeeded, by means of presents, in encouraging some of the natives to come back with them to the Admiral. Tobacco, a plant of slightly intoxicating quality, which they made into little rolls, lighting them at one end to inhale the smoke at the other; the potato, a farinaceous root, which heat converted at once into bread; maize, cotton spun by the women, oranges, lemons, and other nameless fruits, were the only treasures they had found about the houses scattered in the glades of the forest.

Disappointed of his golden dreams, the Admiral, on some misunderstood directions of the natives, unwillingly quitted this enchanting country, to sail on to the east, where he still placed his imaginary Asia. He took on board some men and women from Cuba, bolder and more confident than the rest, to serve as interpreters for the neighbouring countries which he was going to visit, to convert them to the true faith, and to

offer to Isabella these souls which his generous enterprise had saved.

Convinced that Cuba, of which he had not ascertained the limits, was a part of the main-land of Asia, he sailed several days at a short distance from the coast of the true American continent without seeing it. He was not yet to discover the truth so close to his eyes. Yet envy, which was to be the poison of his life, had arisen in the minds of his companions on the very day that his discoveries had crowned the hopes of his whole existence. Amerigo Vespucci, an obscure Florentine, embarked in one of his vessels, was destined to give his name to this new world, to which Columbus alone had been the guide. Vespucci owed this good fortune entirely to chance and to his subsequent voyages with Columbus in the same latitudes. A subaltern officer, devoted to the Admiral, he had never sought to rob him of his glory. The caprice of fortune gave it to him without his having sought to deceive Europe, and custom has retained it. The chief was deprived of his due honour, and the name of the inferior prevailed. Thus is human glory set at nought; but though Columbus was the victim, Amerigo was not guilty. Posterity must bear the blame of the injustice and ingratitude, but a wilful fraud cannot be laid to the charge of the fortunate pilot of Florence.


Envy, which arises in the heart of man in the very hour of success, already began to prey upon the mind of Columbus's lieutenant, Alonzo Pinzon. He commanded the *Pinta*, the second vessel of the squadron, a faster sailer than either of the others. Pinzon pretended to lose them in the night, and got away from his commodore. He had resolved to take advantage of Columbus's discovery, to find out other lands by himself, without genius and without trouble, and after giving them his name, to be the foremost to return to Europe, to reap the produce of the glory, and to gather the rewards due to his master and guide.

Columbus had for some days past noticed the envy and insubordination of his second in command. But he owed much to Alonzo Pinzon; for, without his encouragement and assistance at Palos, he would never have succeeded in equipping his vessels or in engaging seamen. Gratitude had prevented him from punishing the first acts of disobedience of a man to whom he was so deeply indebted. The modest, magnanimous, and forgiving character of Columbus made him avoid all harshness. Full of justice and virtue himself, he expected to find equal justice and virtue in others. This goodness, which Alonzo Pinzon took for weakness, served as an encouragement to ingratitude. He boldly dashed between Columbus and

the new discoveries of which he had resolved to deprive him.

The Admiral understood and regretted the fault, but pretended to believe that the *Pinta's* separation was accidental, and steered with his two vessels to the southeast, towards a dark shade that he perceived over the sea, and made the island of Hispaniola, since called San Domingo. Had it not been for this cloud on the mountains of San Domingo, which induced him to put about, he would have reached the main-land. The American archipelago, by enticing him to wander from isle to isle, seemed to keep him as if purposely, from the goal which he almost touched without seeing it. This phantom of Asia, which had led him to the shores of America, now stood between America and him, to deprive him of the reality by the substitution of a chimera.

This vast new country, pleasant and fruitful, surrounded by an atmosphere as clear as crystal, and bathed by a sea with perfume on its waves, appeared to him by the marvellous island, detached from the continent of India, that he had sought through such voyages and dangers, under the fabulous name of Zipangu. He named it Hispaniola, to mark it as his adopted country. The natives, simple, mild, hospitable, open-hearted and respectful, crowded round them on the shore, as though they were beings of a superior order, whom a



celestial miracle had sent from the verge of the horizon or the bottom of the ocean to be worshipped and adorned as gods. A numerous and happy population then covered the plains and valleys of Hispaniola. The men and women were models of strength and beauty. The perpetual peace which reigned amongst these nations, gave their countenances an expression of gentleness and benevolence. Their laws were only the best instincts of the heart, passed into traditions and customs. They might have been supposed to be a young race, whose vices had not yet had time to develop themselves, and whom the natural inspirations of innocence sufficed to govern. Of agriculture, gardening, and the other arts of life, they knew enough for their government, their building, and the first necessities of existence. Their fields were admirably cultivated, and their elegant cottages were grouped in villages on the edges of forests of fruit-trees, in the neighbourhood of rivers or springs. In a genial climate, without either the severity of winter or the scorching heat of a tropical summer, their clothing consisted only of personal ornaments, or of belts and aprons of cotton cloth, sufficient to protect their modesty. Their form of government was as simple and natural as their ideas. It was but the circle of the family, enlarged in the course of generations, but always grouped round an hereditary chief,

called the Cacique. These caciques were the heads, not the tyrants, of their tribes. Their customs, laws unwritten, yet inviolable as divine ordinances, governed these petty princes: an authority paternal on the one side, and filial on the other, rebellion against which seemed out of the question.

The Cuban natives, whom Columbus had brought with him to serve as guides and interpreters on these seas and islands, already began to comprehend Spanish. They partly understood the language of the inhabitants of Hispaniola, a detached branch of the same race. They thus established an easy and ready means of communication between Columbus and the people whom he had just reached.

The supposed Indians fearlessly conducted the Spaniards into their houses, and presented them with cavassa bread, unknown fruits, fish, sweet roots, tame birds with rich plumage and melodious notes, flowers, palms, bananas, lemons, all the gifts of their sea, sky, earth, and climate. They treated them as guests, as brothers, almost even as gods. "Nature," says Columbus, "is there so prolific, that property has not produced the feeling of avarice or cupidity. These people seem to live in a golden age, happy and quiet amidst open and endless gardens, neither surrounded by ditches, divided by fences, nor protected by walls. They

behave honourably towards one another, without laws, without books, without judges. They consider him wicked who takes delight in harming another. This aversion of the good to the bad seems to be all their legislation." Their religion also was but the sentiment of their own inferiority, and of gratitude and love for the invisible Being who had granted them life and happiness.

What a contrast between the state of these happy races when the Europeans first discovered them and brought them the spirit of the old world, and the condition into which these unfortunate Indians fell a few years after this visit from those who assumed to civilize them! What a mystery of Providence was this unexpected arrival of Columbus in a new world, to which he thought he was bringing liberty and life, but in which, without knowing it, he was sowing tyranny and death!

As Columbus was exploring the bays and havens of the island, the pilot ran the vessel aground while the Admiral was asleep. The ship, threatened with instant destruction by the heavy breakers, was abandoned by the pilot and part of the crew, who, under pretence of taking an anchor ashore, pulled to the other vessel, thinking Columbus doomed to inevitable death. The Admiral's energy again saved, not the ship, but the lives of his companions. He faced the breakers as long as a plank held, and having placed his

men on a raft, he landed as a shipwrecked mariner on the same shore that he had just visited as a conqueror. He was soon joined by the only vessel he had remaining. His shipwreck and his misfortunes did not cool the hospitality of the Cacique, whose guest he had been some days previously. This Cacique, named Guacanagari, the first friend and afterwards the first victim of these strangers, shed tears of compassion over Columbus's disaster. He offered his house, his provisions, and assistance of every kind to the Spaniards. The riches of the Europeans, rescued from the waves and spread out upon the beach, were preserved, as if sacred, from all pillage, and even from troublesome curiosity. These men, who knew no property as between each other, seemed to recognise and respect it in their unfortunate guests. Columbus, in his letters to the King and Queen, is loud in his praise of the easy generosity of this race. "There is nowhere in the universe," he exclaims, "a better nation or a better country. They love their neighbours as themselves; their language is always soft and gracious, and the smile of kindness is ever on their lips. They are naked, it is true, but veiled by modesty and frankness."

Columbus, having established with the younger Cacique relations of the closest and most confiding intimacy, was presented by him with some gold

ornaments. At the sight of gold, the countenance of the Europeans suddenly expressed such passionate avidity and fierce desire, that the Cacique and his subjects instinctively took alarm, as if their new friends had, on the instant, changed their nature and disposition towards them. It was but too true. The companions of Columbus were only coveting the fancied riches of the east, while he himself was seeking the mysterious remnant of the world. The sight of gold had recalled their avarice: their faces had become stern and savage as their thoughts. The Cacique, being informed that this metal was the god of the Europeans, explained to them, by pointing to the mountains beyond the range they saw, the situation of a country from which he received this gold in abundance. Columbus no longer doubted that he had reached the source of Solomon's wealth, and, preparing everything for his speedy return to Europe, in order to announce his triumph, he built a fort in the Cacique's village, to afford security to a party whom he left behind. He selected from his officers and seamen forty men, whom he placed under the command of Pedro de Arana. He instructed them to collect information about the gold region, and to keep up the respect and friendship of the Indians for the Spaniards. He then set out on his return to Europe, loaded with the gifts of the Cacique, and

bringing away all the ornaments and crowns of pure gold that he had been able to procure during his stay from the natives, either by gift or exchange.

While coasting round the island, he met his faithless companion, Alonzo Pinzon. Under pretence of having lost sight of the Admiral, Pinzon had taken a separate course. Concealed in a deep inlet of the island, he had landed, and instead of imitating the mildness and gentle policy of Columbus, had marked his first steps with blood. The Admiral having found his lieutenant, appeared satisfied with his excuses, and willing to attribute his desertion to the night. He ordered Pinzon to follow him to Europe with his vessel. They set sail together, impatient to announce to Spain the news of their wonderful navigation. But the ocean, on which the trades had wafted them gently from wave to wave towards the shores of America, seemed with adverse winds and waters to drive them resolutely back from the land to which they were so anxious to return. Columbus alone, through his knowledge of navigation, and reckoning, the secret of which he concealed from his pilots, knew the course and the true distances. His companions thought they were still thousands of miles from Europe, while he was already aware of being near the Azores. He soon perceived them. Tremendous squalls of wind,—cloud

heaped on cloud,—and lightning such as he had never before seen flash across the heavens and disappear in the sea,—huge and foaming waves driving his vessels helplessly about without aid from the helm or sails, seemed alternately to open and close the gates of death to him and his companions even on the very threshold of their country. The signals, which the two vessels made reciprocally at night, disappeared. Each, while driving before the unceasing tempest, between the Azores and the Spanish coast, believed the other lost. Columbus, who did not doubt that the *Pinta* with Pinzon was buried beneath the waves, and whose own torn sails and damaged rudder would no longer steer his barque, expected every instant to founder beneath one of these mountains of water that he laboured up, to be swept down again from their foaming crests. He had risked his life freely, but he could not bear to sacrifice his glory. To feel that the discovery, which he was bringing to the Old World, was to be buried for ages with him even when so near his port, seemed such a cruel sport of Providence, that he could not make even his piety bend to it. His soul revolted against this slight of fortune. To die when he had but touched with his foot the soil of Europe, and after having placed his secret and his treasure upon the records of his country, was a destiny that he could joyfully accept; but to

allow a second world to perish (so to speak) with him, and to carry to the grave the solution, at last found, of the earth's problem, which his brother men might perhaps be seeking for as many ages as they had already been without it, was a thousand deaths in one. In his vows to all the shrines of Spain, he only asked of God, that he might carry to the shore, even with his wreck, the proof of his return and of his discovery. Meanwhile storm followed storm; the vessel became water-logged, and the savage looks, the angry murmurs, or the sullen silence, of his companions, reproached him for the obstinacy which had driven or persuaded them to this fatal cruise. They considered this continued wrath of the elements as the vengeance of ocean, angry that the boldness of man should have penetrated its mystery. They talked of throwing him into the sea, in order, by a grand expiation to still the waves.

Columbus, heedless of their anger, but completely taken up with the fate of his discovery, wrote upon parchment several short accounts of his voyage, and closed up some in rolls of wax, and others in cedar cases, and threw them into the sea, in hopes that perchance after his death they might be carried upon the shore. It has been said that one of these cases, thus thrown to the winds and waves, drifted about for three centuries and a half upon or beneath the sea, and that not

very long since a sailor from a European vessel, while getting ballast for his ship on the African coast, opposite Gibraltar, picked up a petrified cocoa-nut, and brought it to his captain as a mere natural curiosity. The captain, on opening the nut to see whether the kernel had resisted the action of time, found that the hollow shell concealed a parchment which contained, in a Gothic character, deciphered with difficulty by a scholar at Gibraltar, these words,—“ We cannot survive the storm one day longer. We are between Spain and the newly-discovered Eastern Isles. If the caravel founders, may some one pick up this testimony !—CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.”

The ocean kept this message for 358 years, and did not give it to Europe, until America—colonised, flourishing, and free—already rivalled the old continent. A freak of fortune, to teach men what might have remained concealed so long, if Providence had not forbidden the waves to drown, in Columbus, its great announcer !

The next day, “ Land, ho ! ” was cried. It was the Portuguese isle of St. Mary, the last of the Azores. Columbus and his companions were driven from it by the jealous persecution of the Portuguese. Again given up to the sufferings of hunger and tempest for many long days, it was not until the 4th of March that they entered the Tagus, where they at length anchored off a

European shore, though of a rival kingdom. Columbus, on being presented to the King of Portugal, related his discoveries, without explaining his course, lest this prince might anticipate the fleets of Isabella. The nobles of the Court of John the Second of Portugal advised this prince to have the great navigator assassinated, in order to bury with him his secret, as well as the rights of the Spanish Crown over these new land. John was indignant at this cowardly advice. Columbus was treated with honour, and permitted to send a courier to his sovereigns, to announce his success, and his approaching return by sea to Palos.

He landed there on the 15th of March, 1493, at sunrise, in the midst of a crowd frantic with joy and pride, which even rushed into the water, to carry him triumphantly ashore. He threw himself into the arms of his friend and protector, the poor prior of the convent of La Rabida, Juan Perez, who alone had believed in him, and whom a new hemisphere rewarded for his faith. Columbus walked barefoot at the head of a procession, to the church of the monastery, to return thanks for his safety, for his glory, and for the acquisition to Spain. The whole population followed him with blessings, to the door of this humble convent, at which he had some years before, alone with his child, and on foot, craved hospitality as a beggar. Never has any amongst

men brought to his country or posterity such a conquest since the creation of the globe, except those who have given to earth the revelation of a new idea ;—and this conquest of Columbus had until then cost humanity neither a crime, a single life, a drop of blood, nor a tear. The most delightful days of his existence were those which he passed while resting from his hopes and his glory in the monastery of La Rabida, in the arms of his children, and in the company of his friend and host, the prior of the convent.

And as if Heaven had thought fit to crown his happiness and to avenge him on the envy which was pursuing him, Alonzo Pinzon, the commander of his second vessel, brought the *Pinta* next day into the harbour of Palos, where he hoped to arrive before his commander, and to rob him of the first-fruits of his triumph. But foiled in his evil design, and fearing lest the Admiral might report and punish his desertion, Pinzon died of vexation and disappointment on seeing the vessel of Columbus at anchor in the port. Columbus was too generous to rejoice, much more to have punished him ; and the malice that pursues the steps of the great seemed to expire at his feet.

Ferdinand and Isabella, having been informed of the return and discoveries of their admiral, by the messenger whom he had despatched from Lisbon, awaited him at Barcelona with honour

and munificence worthy the greatness of his services. The Spanish nobility came from all the provinces to meet him. He made a triumphal entry, as a prince of future kingdoms. The Indians brought over by the squadron, as a living proof of the existence of new races of men in these newly discovered lands, marched at the head of the procession, their bodies painted with divers colours, and adorned with gold necklaces and pearls. The animals and birds, the unknown plants, and the precious stones collected on those shores, were exhibited in golden basins, carried on the heads of Moorish or Negro slaves. The eager crowd pressed close upon them, and wondrous tales were circulated around the officers and companions of Columbus. The Admiral himself, mounted on a richly caparisoned charger presented by the King, next appeared, accompanied by a numerous cavalcade of courtiers and gentlemen. All eyes were directed towards the man inspired of Heaven, who first had dared to lift the veil of Ocean. People sought in his face for a visible sign of his mission, and thought they could discern one. The beauty of his features, the thoughtful majesty of his countenance, the vigour of eternal youth joined to the dignity of riper age, the combination of thought with action, of strength with experience, a thorough appreciation of his worth, combined with piety towards God, who had chosen

him from amongst others, and with gratitude towards his sovereigns, who awarded him the honour which he brought them as a conqueror, made Columbus then appear (as those relate who saw him enter Barcelona) like a prophet, or a hero of Holy Writ or Grecian story.

"None could compare with him," they say ; "all felt him to be the greatest or the most fortunate of men."

Ferdinand and Isabella received him on their throne, shaded from the sun by a golden canopy. They rose up before him as though he had been an inspired messenger. They then made him sit on a level with themselves, and listened to the solemn and circumstantial account of his voyages. At the end of his recital, which habitual eloquence had coloured with his exuberant imagination, and impregnated with his fervid enthusiasm, the King and Queen, moved even to tears, fell on their knees and repeated the *Te Deum*, a hymn of thanksgiving for the greatest conquest that the Almighty had ever yet vouchsafed to sovereigns.

Couriers were instantly despatched, to carry the wondrous news and fame of Columbus to all the courts of Europe. The obscurity with which he had until then been surrounded, changed to a brilliant renown, filling the earth with his name. The discovery of the poor geographer of Cordova became the subject of conversation for the world.

Columbus neither suffered his mind to be elated by the honour decreed to his name, nor his pride to be humiliated by the jealousy which began to arise of his glory.

One day, when he was dining at the table of Ferdinand and Isabella, one of the guests, envious of the honour paid to the woolcomber's son, asked him sneeringly, whether he thought no one else would have discovered the new hemisphere if he had not been born. Columbus did not answer the question, for fear of saying too much or too little of himself; but he took an egg between his fingers, and, addressing the whole company present, asked them if they could make it stand upright. None could manage this. Columbus then crushed the egg at one end, and placing it erect on the broken extremity, showed his detractors that, if there were no merit in a simple idea, yet none could find it out before some inventor showed others the example; thus rendering to God the honour of the discovery, but taking to himself the credit of being the first by whom it was made. This apologue has since become the answer of every man whom Providence has selected to point out a way for his fellows, and to tread it before them, without, however, being greater, but only more inspired, than his brethren.

Honours, titles, and territorial rights over the lands of which he should hereafter complete the

discovery and conquest, became, by formal treaty with the Court, the reward of Columbus. He obtained the viceroyalty and the government, with one-fourth of the riches and produce of the seas, the islands and the continents on which he should plant the cross of the Church and the flag of Spain. The Archdeacon of Seville, Fonseca, received the title of Patriarch of the Indies, and was charged with the preparations and armaments of the new expedition, which Columbus was preparing to guide to new conquests. But, from that day, Fonseca became the secret rival of the great navigator; and, as if he had been desirous of crushing the genius which it was his duty to second, while appearing to procure aid for Columbus, was really raising obstacles. His delays and false pretences reduced to seventeen sail the fleet which was to escort the Admiral back across the Atlantic.

The adventurous disposition of the Spaniards of that day, the ardour of religious proselytism, and the spirit of chivalry, collected in these vessels a great number of priests, gentlemen, and adventurers; some anxious to spread the faith, others desirous of winning renown and fortune by being the first to settle in these new countries in which their imagination revelled. Workmen of all trades, labourers from all climates, domestic animals of all races, seeds, plants, vine-shoots, slips of fruit-

trees, sugar-canes, and specimens of all the arts and trades of Europe, were embarked on these ships, to try the climate and soil, to tempt the inhabitants of the new realms, and to rob them of the gold, pearls, perfumes, and spices of India, in return for worthless trifles from Europe. It was the crusade of religion, war, industry, glory, and avidity;—for some, heaven; for others, earth; for all, the unknown and the marvellous.

The most illustrious of the companions who embarked with Columbus was Alonzo de Ojeda, formerly a page of Queen Isabella, and the handsomest, bravest, and most adventurous cavalier of her Court. His mind and body were so overflowing with courage, that he carried his hardihood to the verge of madness. One day, when Isabella had ascended the lofty tower called the Giralda of Seville, to enjoy its wonderful height, and look down from its summit on the streets and houses of the town, appearing like an open ant-heap at her feet, he sprang on to a narrow beam which projected over the cornice, and balancing himself on one foot at the end of it, executed the most extraordinary feats of boldness and activity to amuse his sovereign, without being in the least alarmed or dizzy at the fear of imminent death.

On the 25th September, 1493, the fleet left the Bay of Cadiz. Shouts of joy from the shore accompanied this second departure, which seemed

destined to a continued triumph. The two sons of Columbus accompanied their father on board his flag-ship. He gave them his blessing and left them in Spain, that at least the better half of his existence might remain sheltered from the perils he was going to encounter. His squadron consisted of three large ships, and fourteen caravellas. The fleet discovered on the 2d of November the island of Guadaloupe, and cruised amongst the Carribbee islands, to which he gave names derived from his pious recollections ; and soon afterwards making the point of Hispaniola now called Hayti, Columbus set sail for the gulf where he had built the fort in which he had left his forty companions. Night concealed the shore from his view, when, full both of hope and of anxiety, he cast anchor in the roadstead. He did not wait for dawn to announce his arrival to the colony. A salute from his guns boomed over the waves to acquaint the Spaniards with his return ; but the cannon of the fort remained silent, and this salute to the new world was only answered by the echo from the lonely cliffs. Next morning, with day-break, he discovered the beach deserted, the fort destroyed, the guns half buried under its ruins, the bones of the Spaniards bleaching on the shore, and the village of the Caciques abandoned by its inhabitants. The few natives who appeared in the distance, at the edge of the forest, seemed afraid to come near,

as if they were withheld by a feeling of remorse, or by the dread of revenge. The Cacique, more confident in his innocence, and in the justice of Columbus, whom he had learnt to esteem, at length advanced, and related the crimes of the Spaniards, who had abused the hospitality of his subjects by oppressing the natives, carrying off their wives and daughters, reducing their hosts to slavery, and, at length, rousing the hatred of the tribe. After having slaughtered a great number of Indians, and burnt their huts, they had themselves been killed. The ruined fort covering their bones was the first monument of the contact of these two human races, one of which was bringing slavery and destruction on the other. Columbus wept over the crimes of his companions, and the misfortunes of the Cacique. He resolved to seek another place to disembark and colonise the island.

The most beautiful amongst the young Indian girls captured from the neighbouring isles, and kept prisoners in the ships, named Catalina, had attracted the attention of a Cacique, who visited Columbus on board his ship. A plan of escape was arranged between the Cacique and the object of his love, by signs which the Europeans did not understand. The night that Columbus set sail, Catalina and her companions, foiling the watchfulness of their guards, sprang into the water.

They swam, pursued in vain by the boats of the Europeans, towards the shore, where the young Cacique had lighted a fire to guide them. The lovers, united by this feat of skill and strength, took shelter in the forests, and concealed themselves from the vengeance of the Europeans.

Columbus landed again on virgin soil, at some distance further on, and founded the town of Isabella. He established friendly relations with the natives, built, cultivated, and governed the first European colony, the nucleus of so many others, and sent around detachments to scour the plains and mountains of Hispaniola. He first enticed, then attracted, and finally subjected, by mild and equitable laws, the various tribes of this vast island. He built forts, and marked out roads towards the different parts of the empire. He searched for gold, which he discovered to be less abundant than he expected in these regions, which he still took for India; but he only found the inexhaustible fertility of a rich land, and a people as easy to govern as to subdue. He sent back the greater part of his vessels to Spain, to ask his sovereign for fresh supplies of men, animals, tools, plants, and seeds, required by the immensity of the countries which he was going to win over to the customs, religion, and arts of Europe. But the disaffected, the jealous, and the envious, were the first to rush on board his fleet, to raise mur-

murs, accusations, and calumnies against him. He himself remained behind, afflicted with the gout, suffering excruciating pain ; condemned to inactivity of body and unceasing mental anxiety, and harassed, in his rising colony, by the rivalries, the seditions, the plots, the disgraceful insubordination, and the necessities of his companions.

Always indulgent and sober-minded, Columbus triumphed, through sheer force of character, over the turbulence of his countrymen and the disobedience of his lieutenants, and was satisfied with confining the mutineers on board the vessels. On recovering from his long illness, he traversed the island with a picked body of men, seeking in vain for the gold mines of Solomon, but studying the natural history and peculiarities of the soil, and spreading, throughout his journey, respect and affection for his name.

He found, on his return to the colony, the same disorder, mutiny, and vice. The Spaniards made a bad use of the superstition and fear with which they and their horses inspired the natives. The Indians took them for monstrous beings—horse and rider forming but one creature—striking down, crushing, and blasting with fire, the enemies of the Europeans. By the influence of this dread, they subdued, enslaved, violated, abused, and tortured, this gentle and obedient race. Columbus again interfered to punish the

tyranny of his companions. He desired to bring the Indian tribes the religion and arts of Europe, not its yoke, its vices, and its sins. After re-establishing some sort of order, he embarked to visit the scarcely discovered island of Cuba. He reached it, and sailed for a long time past its shores, without discovering the extremity of the land, which he took for a continent. He sailed from thence towards Jamaica, another island of immense extent, whose mountain peaks he saw amongst the clouds. Then, crossing an archipelago, which he called the Garden of the Queen, from the richness and sweet perfume of the vegetation on its isles, he returned to Cuba, and succeeded in establishing relations with the natives. The Indians looked on with respect at the ceremonies of Christian worship which the Spaniards celebrated in a recess amongst the palm-trees by the shore. One of their old men came up to Columbus, after the ceremony, and said, in a solemn tone, "What thou hast done is well, for it appears to be thy worship of the universal God. They say that thou comest to these lands with great might and power beyond all resistance. If that be so, hear from me what our ancestors have told our fathers, who have repeated it to ourselves. When the souls of men are separated by the divine will from their bodies, they go, some to a country without sun and with-

out trees, others to a region of beauty and delight, according as they have acted ill or well here below, by doing evil or good to their fellows. If therefore, thou art to die like us, have a care to do no wrong to those who have never injured thee."

This discourse of the old Indian, related by Las Casas, showed that they had a religion rivalling Christianity in the simplicity of its precepts and purity of its morality — either a mysterious emanation or primitive nature untarnished by depravity and vice, or the tradition of an ancient civilization long since worn out and exhausted.

After a long and fatiguing voyage of discovery, Columbus returned in a dying state to Hispaniola. His fatigue and anxiety, added to suffering and to the approach of age, unfelt by his mind, but weighing upon his body, for a time triumphed over his genius. His sailors brought him back to Isabella insensible and exhausted. But Providence, which has never abandoned him, watched over him during the abeyance of his faculties. On recovering from his long unconsciousness, he found his beloved brother, Bartholomew Columbus, sitting by his bedside. He had come from Europe to Hispaniola, as though he had felt a presentiment of his brother's danger and need. Bartholomew was endowed with the strength of his family, as Diego had the gentleness, and Christopher

the genius. The vigour of his body equalled the energy of his mind. Of athletic frame and iron nerve, with robust health, a commanding aspect, and a powerful voice, that could be heard above wind and waves; a sailor from his youth, a soldier and an adventurer all his life; gifted by nature and by habit with the boldness that secures obedience, and the integrity which ensures submission; as fit for command as for contest; he was the very man whom Columbus most wanted in the dangerous extremity to which anarchy had reduced his kingdom; and more than all this, he was a brother imbued with as much respect as attachment for the head and honour of his house. His near relationship made Columbus certain of the fidelity of his lieutenant. The attachment of the brothers to each other was the best pledge of confidence on one side, and submission on the other. Columbus during the long months throughout which exhausted nature compelled him to inaction and rest, gave up the government and authority to him, under the title of Adelantado, or superintendent and vice-governor of the lands under his rule. Bartholomew, a severer administrator than Christopher, commanded more respect, but raised more opposition, than his brother.

The rashness and treachery of the young Spanish warrior, Ojeda, raised a war of despair between

the Indians and the colony. That intrepid adventurer, having advanced with some horsemen into the most distant and independent portions of the island, persuaded one of the Caciques to return with him to Isabella, with a great number of Indians, to see the grandeur and wealth of the Europeans. The Cacique was induced to follow him. After some days' march, when they halted on the bank of a river, Ojeda, practising on the simplicity of the Indian chief, showed him a pair of handcuffs of polished steel, whose brilliancy dazzled him. Ojeda told him that these irons were bracelets, which the kings of Europe wore on grand days when they met their subjects. His host was induced to ask to wear them, and to ride on horseback like a Spaniard, that his subjects might see him in this pretended dress of the sovereigns of the Old World. The Cacique had scarcely put on the handcuffs, and mounted behind the cunning Ojeda, when the Spanish horsemen galloped off with their prisoner, crossed the island, and brought him in chains to the colony, where they kept him in the irons which his childish vanity had induced him to put on.

A vast insurrection roused the Indians against this perfidy of strangers, whom they had at first considered as guests, friends, benefactors, and gods. This insurrection brought down upon them the vengeance of the Spaniards. They reduced

the Indians to a state of slavery, and sent four vessels to Spain, loaded with these victims of their avarice, to make an infamous traffic in human cattle ; thus, making up, by the price of slaves, for the gold which they expected to pick up like dust, in countries where they found nothing but blood : the war degenerated into a man hunt. Dogs brought from Europe, and trained to this chase in the forests, tracking down, throttling, and worrying the natives, assisted the Spaniards in this inhuman devastation of the country.

Columbus, at length recovered from his long illness, on re-assuming the reins of government, was himself drawn into the wars which had broken out during his illness. He became a warrior and then a peace-maker, after his sailor's life. He gained some decisive battles over the Indians, obliged them to submit to the yoke which gentleness and policy made easy, and merely subjected them to a small tribute of gold and the fruits of their country, rather as a token of alliance than of slavery. The island again flourished under his moderation ; but the unhappy and confiding Cacique, Guacanagari, who had been the first to receive the strangers, ashamed and vexed even to despair at having been the involuntary accomplice of his country's ruin, fled into the inaccessible mountains of the interior, and died there a freeman, rather than live a slave under the laws of

those who had taken a shameful advantage of his kindness.

During the sickness of Columbus, and the troubles in the island, his enemies at Court had injured him in the favour of Ferdinand. Isabella, more firm in her admiration of this great man, tried in vain to interpose her protection. The Court sent to Hispaniola a magistrate invested with secret powers, authorizing him to take informations concerning alleged crimes of the viceroy, and to dispossess him of his authority and send him back to Europe, if the accusations were confirmed. This partial judge, named Aguado, arrived at Hispaniola, while the viceroy was at the head of the troops in the interior of the island, employed in pacifying and managing the country. Forgetting the gratitude which he owed Columbus, as the first cause of his wealth, Aguado, even before collecting information, declared Columbus guilty, and provisionally deprived him of his sovereign authority. Surrounded and applauded on landing by the malcontents of the colony, he ordered Columbus to come to Isabella, the Spanish capital, and to acknowledge his authority. Columbus, surrounded by his friends and his devoted soldiery, might easily have refused obedience to the insolent commands of a subordinate. He, however, bowed before the mere name of his sovereign, went unarmed to

Aguado, and giving up all his authority, allowed him to carry on the infamous trial to which his calumniators had subjected him.

But at the very moment when his fortune was thus waning before persecution, it bestowed on him the favour of all others the most sure to reconcile him with the Court. One of his young officers, named Miguel Diaz, having killed one of his companions in a duel, fled away, for fear of chastisement, into one of the back parts of the island. The tribe that inhabited that district was governed by the widow of a Cacique, a young Indian of great beauty. She became deeply enamoured of the Spanish fugitive, and married him. But Diaz, though loved and presented with a crown by the object of his affection, could not forget his country, or conceal the sadness which his exile threw over him. His wife, questioning him as to the cause of his melancholy, was informed that gold was the passion of the Spaniards, and that they would come and live with him in that country if they could hope to find the precious metal. The young Indian, overjoyed at having the means of retaining the man she loved, acquainted him with the existence of inexhaustible mines, hidden amongst the mountains. Having learnt this secret, and being certain that it would procure his pardon, Diaz hastened to inform Columbus of the discovery of this

treasure. The brother of the viceroy, Barthomew, went off with Diaz and an armed escort to verify the discovery. In a few days they reached a valley in which a stream rolled down gold dust amongst its sand, and where the rocks in the bed of the river were covered with shining particles of the metal. Columbus established a fort in the neighbourhood, worked and enlarged mines opened long before, and collected immense wealth for his sovereigns, becoming more and more convinced that he had discovered the fabulous land of Ophir. Diaz, grateful and true to the young Indian to whom he owed his pardon, his fortune, and his happiness, had his marriage with her blessed by the priests of his own faith, and governed her tribe in peace.

After this discovery, Columbus yielded without hesitation to the orders of Aguado, and embarked with his judge for Spain. He arrived, after a voyage of eight months, more like a criminal led to execution than a conqueror returning with trophies. Calumny, incredulity, and reproach, met him at Cadiz. Spain, which expected wonders, saw nothing come back from the land of its dreams, but broken adventurers, accusers, and naked slaves. The unfortunate Cacique, still confined in the fetters of Ojeda, and taken over as a living trophy for Ferdinand and Isabella, died at sea, cursing his confidence in the Europeans and their treachery.

Columbus, adapting his dress to the sadness and misery of his situation, went to Burgos, where the Court then was, in a Franciscan's dress, with nothing over it but a cord for a girdle; his head bowed down with years, care, and affliction; white-haired, and bare-footed. He represented Genius kneeling to glory for pardon. Isabella alone received him with kind compassion, and persisted in giving credit to his virtue and his services. This constant, though secret favour of the Queen, sustained the Admiral against the detractions and calumnies of the Court. He proposed new voyages, and vaster discoveries. They consented to trust him with more vessels, but they made him waste, by systematic delays, the few years for which his advanced age left him strength. The pious Isabella, while granting Columbus fresh titles and powers, stipulated on behalf of the Indians for conditions of liberty and humanity far in advance of the ideas of her time. The instinct of a woman's heart condemned that slavery which religion and philosophy could not abolish until 400 years later. At length Columbus was acquitted, and again allowed to embark and set sail for his new country; but hatred and envy followed him even on board the vessel on which he hoisted his flag as Admiral of the Ocean. Breviesca, the treasurer of the patriarch of the Indies, and Fonseca, the enemy of Columbus,

outrageously abused the Admiral, just as he was heaving anchor. Columbus, who until then had been restrained by his own strength of character, his patience, and his feeling of the greatness of his mission, now, for the first time, gave vent to his wrath. At this last insult of his enemies, he at length gave way to human passion, and striking with all the vigour of his spirit, and all the strength of his arm, redoubled by anger, at his vile persecutor, he felled him to the deck, and trampled him under foot in his scorn. Such was the farewell to the jealousy of Europe, of him who seemed too great or too fortunate for a mortal. This sudden vengeance of the Admiral raised a new cause of hatred in the heart of Fonseca, and gave his enemies a new point of attack. The wind which sprung up carried him out of the reach of the insults, and out of sight of the shore, of his country.

In this voyage he changed his course, and reached the island of Trinidad, which he named. He rounded this island, and coasted the true shore of the American continent, near the mouth of the Orinoco. The freshness of the sea-water, which he tasted in this neighbourhood, ought to have convinced him that a river which poured a sufficient flood upon the ocean to freshen its waves, could only come from the bosom of a continent. He landed, however, on this coast without sus-

pecting that it was the shore of the unknown world. He found it deserted and silent as a land waiting for inhabitants. A distant column of smoke rising over its vast forests, an abandoned hut, and some traces of bare feet on the sand, were all that he beheld of America. He did but plant his footstep there, and pass a single night under the sail which served him for a tent ; but even this short landing ought to have been sufficient to bequeath his name to the new hemisphere.

He quitted the Gulf of Paria, and after a laborious survey of these seas, revisited the coasts of Hispaniola. His afflictions of mind and body, his long delay in Spain, the ingratitude of his fellow-countrymen, the coldness of Ferdinand, the hatred of his ministers, his want of sleep during his voyages, and the infirmities of age, had affected him more than fatigue. His eyes were inflamed from want of rest, and from gazing upon maps and stars ; his limbs, stiffened and aching with the gout, could scarcely support him. His mind alone was vigorous ; and his genius, piercing into the future, carried him in thought beyond his sufferings, and beyond his time. Bartholomew Columbus, his brother, who had continued to govern the colony during his absence, was again his consolation and succour. He came to meet the Admiral as soon as his scouts signalled a sail in sight.

Bartholomew related to his brother the vicissitudes of the colony during his absence. He had scarcely finished the exploration and subjugation of the country, when the disorders of the Spaniards and the conspiracies of his own lieutenants, undid the effects of his wisdom and energy. A superintendent of the colony, named Roldan, popular and cunning, got together a party amongst the sailors and adventurers, the refuse of Spain, thrown off by the mother country upon the colony. He established himself with them on the opposite shore of San Domingo, and leagued against Bartholomew, with the Caciques of the neighbouring tribes. He built or captured forts, in which he defied the authority of his legitimate chief. The Indians, seeing these divisions amongst their tyrants, took advantage of them to rise in insurrection, and to refuse the tribute. The new settlement was in complete anarchy. The heroism of Bartholomew alone retained some fragments of power in his hands. Ojeda freighted vessels on his own account for Spain; he cruised and made a descent on the southern shore of the island, and leagued himself with Roldan. Then Roldan betrayed Ojeda, and ranged himself again under the authority of the governor. During these disturbances of the colony, a young Spaniard, of remarkable beauty, Don Fernando de Guerara, won the love of the daughter of Anacoana, the

widow of the Cacique whom Ojeda had sent to Spain, but who died on the voyage. Anacoana herself was still young, and celebrated amongst the tribes of the island for her incomparable beauty, her natural genius, and her poetical talent, which made her the adored Sibyl of her countrymen. Notwithstanding the misfortunes of her husband, she entertained a great admiration, and an unconquerable predilection, for the Spaniards. The numerous tribes which she and her brother governed, afforded a safe asylum to these strangers. She extended to them hospitality, money, and protection in their disgrace. Her subjects, more civilised than the other Indian tribes, lived in peace, rich and happy under her government.

Roldan, who ruled over that part of the island which was under the beautiful Anacoana, became jealous of the sojourn and influence of Fernando de Guerara at the court of this princess. He forbade him to marry her daughter, and ordered him to embark. Fernando, influenced by love, refused to obey, and conspired against Roldan, but was surprised and taken prisoner by Roldan's soldiery in the house of Anacoana, and sent to Isabella to be tried. An expedition left the capital of the colony under pretence of surveying the island, and was received with great kindness in Anacoana's capital. The perfidious chief of

this expedition, abusing the confidence and hospitality of this queen, had induced her to invite thirty caciques from the south of the island to see the festivities she was preparing for the Spaniards. The Spaniards, during the dances and feasts that they attended, arranged to fire the house, and kill their generous hostess, with her family, her guests, and her people. They persuaded Anacoana, her daughter, and the thirty caciques, to see from their balcony the evolutions of their horse, and a sham fight amongst the cavaliers of their escort. The cavalry suddenly fell upon the unarmed populace that curiosity had collected in the square ; they sabred them, and rode them down under the horses' feet ; then, throwing a body of infantry round the palace, to prevent the escape of the queen and her guests, they fired the building, still containing the remains of the feast at which they had themselves been seated ; and beheld, with a cruelty only equalled by their ingratitude, the beautiful and unhappy Anacoana, forced back into her palace, expire amongst the flames, imprecating upon her murderers the vengeance of her gods.

This crime against hospitality, innocence, royalty, beauty, and genius, of which Anacoana was the type amongst the Indians, threw the island into a horror and commotion, which Columbus, with all his policy and all his virtue, was for a long while

unable to subdue. The flames of the palace, and the blood of this queen, whose dazzling beauty and national poetry filled her people with affection and enthusiasm, roused the oppressed against the oppressors: the island became a field of carnage, a prison, and a grave, to the unhappy Indians. The Spaniards, as fanatical in their proselytism as they were barbarous in their avarice, now entered in Hispaniola upon the career of crime and cruelty which was shortly afterwards to depopulate Mexico. The embrace of the two races was fatal to the weakest.

While Columbus was trying to separate and pacify these different portions of the population, King Ferdinand, informed by his enemies of the misfortunes of the island, imputed them to the governor. Columbus had asked the Court to send him a magistrate of high rank, whose decision might command the respect of his undisciplined companions. The Court sent him Bobadilla, a man of unimpeachable morality, but fanatical, and of excessive pride. The ill-defined power with which the royal decree had invested him, while it made him a subordinate officer, raised him at the same time above all authority. On arriving at Hispaniola, prejudiced against the Admiral, he summoned him to appear before him as a prisoner, and, having had chains brought, ordered the soldiers to confine their general. The soldiers,

accustomed to respect and love their chief, whom age and glory had made more venerable in their eyes, refused, and remained still, as if they had been desired to commit a sacrilege. But Columbus himself, holding out his hands to receive the chains his king had sent him, allowed himself to be fettered by one of his own domestics,—a volunteer executioner, a vile ruffian in his own pay and household service—called Espinosa, and whose name Las Casas has preserved as the type of servile insolence and ingratitude.

Columbus himself ordered his two brothers, Bartholomew and Diego, who still commanded the army in the interior, to submit without resistance, and without a murmur, to his judge. He was shut up in the dungeon of fort Isabella for several months, while the informations were being taken for his trial, in which his rebellious subjects and all his enemies, now his accusers and jury, vied with each other in charging him with the most absurd and most hateful imputations. An object of public scorn and detestation, he heard from his prison the savage jests and boasts of his persecutors, who assembled round him every evening to insult his misfortunes. He expected hourly to see the order for his execution. But Bobadilla did not venture upon this last crime. He ordered the Admiral to be banished the colony and sent to Spain, there to meet the justice or

mécy of the King. Alonso de Villejo was appointed to guard him during the passage—a man of honour, obedient from a sense of military duty; but, though obedient, disgusted at his orders and merciful to his prisoner. Columbus, seeing him enter his dungeon, did not doubt that his last hour had come. His innocence, and prayer, had prepared him to meet death. Human nature, however, made him feel some anxiety. “Where are you going to take me?” said he to the officer, with an inquiring look as well as tone. “To the vessel in which you are to embark, my Lord,” said Villejo. “To embark?” said Columbus, hesitating to believe in this message, which implied that his life was safe; “do not deceive me, Villejo!” “No, my Lord,” replied the officer, “I swear, before God, that nothing is more true.” He assisted the tottering steps of the Admiral, and placed him on board, loaded with irons, and pursued by the hooting of a vile populace.

The vessel had hardly set sail, when Villejo and Andreas Martin, commanders of the ship which had become the floating dungeon of their chief, respectfully addressed him, at the head of the crew, and desired to take off his irons. Columbus, to whom these fetters were both a sign of obedience to Isabella, and a symbol of the wickedness of men, from which he suffered in body, but at which he rejoiced in mind, thanked them, but obstinately

refused to take off his gyves. "No," said he, "my sovereigns have written to me to submit to Bobadilla. It is in their names that I have been put in these irons, which I will wear until they themselves order them to be removed; and I will afterwards preserve them," he added, with an allusion to his services and innocence, "as a reminiscence of the reward bestowed by men upon my labours."

His son and Las Casas both relate that Columbus faithfully kept this promise; that he always had his chains hung up in his sight wherever he lived; and that, in his will, he ordered them to be placed with him in his coffin; as if he had desired to appeal to God against the injustice and ingratitude of his contemporaries, and to take with him to heaven a material proof of the wickedness and cruelty with which he had been treated on earth.

But party hatred did not cross the ocean. The spoliation, the imprisonment, and the fetters of Columbus, roused the pity and the indignation of the people of Cadiz. When they saw the old man who had presented a new empire to their country—himself brought back from that empire as a vile miscreant, and repaid for his services with disgrace—all exclaimed against Bobadilla. Isabella, who was then at Granada, shed tears over this indignity; and commanded that his fetters should be changed for rich robes, and his gaolers for an escort of

honour. She sent for him to Granada ; he fell at her feet, and sobs of thankfulness for some time interrupted his speech. The King and Queen did not even deign to examine the accusations which were laid to his charge. He was acquitted as much in consequence of their respect as of his own merits. They kept the Admiral some time at their Court, and sent out another governor, named Ovando, to replace Bobadilla. Ovando had the principles which make a man honest, rather than the virtues which produce generosity of character. He was one of those with whom everything is narrow, even to their sense of duty, and in whom honesty seems rather to have arisen from contracted scruples than from a feeling of honour. Least of all was he fitted to understand and replace a great man. He was ordered by Isabella to protect the Indians, and was forbidden to sell them as slaves. The share in the revenue, guaranteed by treaty to Columbus, was to be remitted to him in Spain, as well as the treasures of which he had been deprived by Bobadilla. A fleet of thirty sail escorted the new governor to Hispaniola.

Columbus, unaffected by old age, and recruited from his sufferings, was impatient of rest and even of the honours of the whole country. Vasco de Gama had just discovered the road to India by the Cape of Good Hope. The world was full of admiration at this discovery of the Portuguese mariner.

A noble spirit of rivalry occupied the mind of the Genoese navigator. Convinced of the circularity of the earth, he thought to reach the prolongation of the eastern Continent by sailing on a straight course westward, and he solicited of the Spanish Court the command of a fourth expedition. He embarked at Cadiz, on the 19th May, 1502, for the last time, accompanied by his brother Bartholomew Columbus, and his son Fernando, then fourteen years of age. His squadron consisted of four small vessels adapted for cruising on the coast, and exploring without danger the gulfs and estuaries which he wished to examine. His crews only mustered 150 strong. Although nearly seventy, his vigorous old age had, from his mental energy, resisted the waste of years: neither his severe illnesses, nor the approach of death, could turn him aside from his purpose. "Man," he would say, "is an instrument that must work until it breaks, in the hands of Providence, which uses it for its own purposes. As long as the body is able, the spirit must be willing."

He had intended to touch at Hispaniola to refit, and had authority from the Court to do so. He crossed the ocean in stormy weather, and arrived off Hispaniola with broken masts and torn sails, short of water and provisions. His nautical experience made him foresee a hurricane more terrible than he had yet encountered. He sent a

boat to ask Ovando's leave to take shelter in the roads of Isabella. Aware of the impending danger, Columbus, in his letter, warned Ovando to delay the departure of a numerous convoy ready to start from Hispaniola for Spain, laden with all the treasures of the new world. Ovando mercilessly refused Columbus a brief refuge in the very port that he himself had discovered. He bore away indignantly, and, seeking a shelter under the remotest cliffs of the island beyond the jurisdiction of Ovando, waited for the tempest that he had foretold. It destroyed the governor's whole fleet, with all its treasures, and cost the lives of 1000 Spaniards. Columbus felt its effects even in this distant roadstead, in which he had taken shelter. He sighed over the misfortunes of his countrymen, and, leaving this inhospitable island, revisited Jamaica, and at length landed on the Continent in the bay of Honduras. He encountered sixty days of continued tempest, buffeted about from cape to cape and isle to isle, on the unknown shore of that America whose conquest the elements seemed to dispute with him. He lost one of his vessels, and the fifty men who composed its crew, at the mouth of a river which he named Desastro.

As the sea seemed resolutely to obstruct the road to the Indies, which he always had in his mind, he cast anchor between the continent and a

charming island. He was visited by the Indians, and kept seven of them on board with him, in order that he might learn their language, and obtain intelligence. He cruised with them along a shore where the natives had gold and pearls in abundance. At the beginning of the year 1504, he ascended the river Veragua, and sent his brother Bartholomew, at the head of sixty Spaniards, to visit the villages on its banks, and search for gold mines. He found nothing but forests and naked savages. The Admiral quitted this river, and sailed up another of which the banks were peopled by Indians, who exchanged gold with his crews for the commonest trifles of Europe. He thought he had attained the object of his hopes. He had reached the climax of his misfortunes. War broke out between this handful of Europeans and the numerous population of these shores. Bartholomew Columbus struck down with his own hand the most powerful and most dreaded Cacique of the Indians, and made him prisoner. A village which the companions of Columbus had built on the coast, to establish a trade with the interior, was surprised and burnt by the natives. Eight Spaniards, pierced by arrows, perished under the ruins of their cabins. Bartholomew rallied the boldest of his company, and drove back the savages into their forest; but the blood that had been shed increased the mutual hatred of the

rares, and the Indian canoes in great force attacked a boat from the squadron, which was trying to pull further up the river. All the Europeans on board were massacred. During this sanguinary struggle, Columbus, who was confined to his ship by his bodily infirmities and sickness, kept the Cacique and the Indian chiefs prisoners on board the vessel. These chiefs, being made acquainted with the wasting of their territories, and the capture of their wives, tried to escape during a dark night by lifting up the hatch that covered their floating dungeon. The crew, aroused by the noise, drove them down below, and fastened the scuttle with an iron bar. The next day, when the scuttle was opened to give them food, they were all found dead. They had all killed one another in despair, to escape slavery.

Columbus was shortly afterwards separated by the breakers from his brother Bartholomew, who had remained ashore with the remainder of the expedition, and his only means of communication was owing to the courage of one of the officers, who swam to and fro across the surf, with news that became worse and worse every day. He could not leave his companions, or abandon them in their misfortunes. Anxiety, sickness, hunger—the prospect of a shipwreck without relief, and unwitnessed, on the much-desired but fatal con-

continent—were warring in his breast with his heroic constancy and pious submission to the commands of God, of whom he felt that he was at once the messenger and the victim. He thus described the state of his mind during his vigils:—"I was tired, and had fallen asleep, when a sad and piteous voice spoke these words to me,—'Weak man, slow to believe and to serve thy God, the God of the Universe! How otherwise did God unto Moses and David his servants? From the time of thy birth, He has had great care of thee. As soon as thou reachedst man's estate, he made thy obscure name wonderfully known throughout the world; he gave thee possession of the Indies, the favoured part of his creation; he let thee find the key of the gates of the unmeasured ocean, until then an impassable barrier. Turn thee toward Him and bless his mercies to thee; and if there is yet a great enterprise to be accomplished, thy age will be no obstacle to his designs. Was not Abraham more than a hundred years of age when he begat Isaac, or was Sarah young? Who caused thy present afflictions, God or the world? The promises he made thee he hath never broken. He never told thee, after thou hadst done his bidding, that thou hadst not understood his orders. He renders all that he owes, yea, and more besides. What thou sufferest to-day is thy payment for the labour and

danger thou hast undergone for other masters. Fear nothing, therefore ; take courage even in thy despair. All thy tribulations are engraven on marble, and not without reason, for surely will they be accomplished,—and the voice which had spoken to me left me full of consolation and of courage.”

A change of season at length brought about a change of weather, and the two brothers, so long separated, again met on board. They sailed slowly towards Hispaniola. One of the three remaining caravels foundered from utter decay as they neared the shore. He had now only two crazy old vessels for himself and his three crews. His companions, depressed in spirits, without provisions and without strength, his anchors lost, his vessels leaky, and all their planks worm-eaten, and completely honeycombed ; the pitiless storms driving him back from Hispaniola towards Jamaica, he had just time to run his water-logged vessels aground upon the sand of an unknown bay. He tied them together into one mass with cables, and, joining their decks by a platform of planks, over which he spread an awning for his crew, he waited, in this dreadful situation of a shipwrecked company, for the help of Providence.

The Indians, attracted by the shipwreck and the singular fortress built by the strangers upon their beach, exchanged provisions for worthless

objects, to which novelty gave value in their eyes. But months passed away, provisions were getting scarce, and fear for the future, and the seditious murmurs of the crews, gave rise to great anxiety in the mind of the Admiral. The only hope of safety left, was in making Ovando, the Governor of Hispaniola, acquainted with his position. But fifty leagues of sea rolled between Hispaniola and Jamaica. An Indian canoe was the only craft he could set afloat; and who would be sufficiently generous to risk his life for his companions upon such a long and perilous voyage in a hollow tree, and without any guidance but a paddle? Diego Mendez, a young officer of the squadron, who had already shown, on other occasions, that disregard of self which makes heroes and accomplishes wonders, presented himself to the Admiral's mind. He had him secretly called to his bed, to which he was confined by the gout, and said to him, "My son, of all that are here, you and I alone understand the present danger, in which our only prospect is death. There still remains an experiment to be tried—for one of us to expose himself to death in the endeavour to save all. Will you be that one?" Mendez answered, "My Lord, I have several times risked my life for my companions; but some of them murmur, and say that your favour always singles me out when there is any daring exploit to be attempted. Call upon

the whole crew to-morrow morning for one of them to undertake the duty you offer me. If no one volunteers, I will accept it." The Admiral did as Mendez desired. All the crew said it was unreasonable to require them to make such a long passage in a mere morsel of wood, the sport of the winds and waves. Mendez then stepped forward modestly, and said, "I have but a single life to lose; but I am ready to risk it in your service, and in the hope of saving all. I confide myself to the protection of God." He set off, and soon disappeared in the dimness of the horizon, from the Spaniards whose lives depended upon his.

Meanwhile, the messenger of Columbus in his frail bark, guided by Providence across the waste of waters, was at length thrown, a remnant of a distant wreck, upon the rocks of Hispaniola. Guided across the island by the natives, he succeeded, after endless fatigue and dangers, in reaching the governor Ovando. He gave him the Admiral's message, and added by the interest of his story to the pity which his account of the desperate situation of Columbus and his companions ought to have inspired in his countrymen. But, whether from incredulity, or indolence, or a secret hope of effecting the ruin of a rival too great for his presence not to be embarrassing, the Spanish authorities of Hispaniola allowed, under various pretences, days, and even months, to pass.

Then they sent, as it were unwillingly, a small vessel commanded by Escobar, merely to reconnoitre the position of the shipwrecked vessels, without landing on the coast or speaking with the crews. The vessel had appeared at a distance one night to Columbus and his sailors, and again disappeared from their eyes so mysteriously, that their superstition had made them take it for a phantom-ship, which came to mock their hopes or to announce their death.

Ovando at length made up his mind to send ships to the Admiral, to rescue him from sedition, famine, and death. After a sixteen months' shipwreck, the Admiral, overcome with age and infirmities, increased by his misfortunes, revisited, for a short season, the island which he had made an empire, and from which jealousy and ingratitude had driven him. He remained for some months in the house of the governor, well received in appearance, but deprived of all influence in the government, seeing his enemies in favour, and his friends banished or persecuted for their fidelity to him; grieving over the ruin and slavery of the land which he had found a garden, and now left a grave to his beloved Indians. His own property confiscated, his revenues plundered, his estates depopulated or wasted, exposed him in his old age to poverty, want, and sickness. He, and his son and brother, with a few servants, were at

length put on board a vessel bound for Europe, and a continued tempest swept him on through storm after storm to San Lucar, where he disembarked on the 7th of November. He was thence removed to Seville, where he arrived broken down in health, in a dying state, but unsubdued in spirit, unconquerable in will, and still full of hope for the future.

The judgment on his conduct, and the question of restoring his property, were referred to courts of conscience, which, without venturing to deny his rights, wore out his patience by delay. They were at the same time wearing out his life. His mental anxiety, and his sense of the poverty in which he was likely to leave his brothers and sons, added to his bodily sufferings. From his sick-bed he wrote to the King: "Your Majesty does not think fit to keep the promises which I have received from you, and from the Queen, who is now in glory. To struggle with your will would be wrestling with the wind. I have done my duty. May God, who has always been good to me, accomplish what remains, according to his divine justice!"

He felt that life, and not his firmness, was about to fail him. He asked one of his servants—the old and last remaining companion of his voyages, his glory, and his misfortunes—to bring to his bedside a little breviary, a gift made him by Pope

Alexander the Sixth, at the time when sovereigns treated him as a sovereign. He wrote his will, with a weak hand, on a page of this book, to which he attributed the virtue of divine consecration.

Strange sight for this poor servant ! An old man, abandoned by the world, and dying on a pauper's bed in a hired chamber at Segovia, distributing, in his will, seas, hemispheres, islands, continents, nations, and empires ! He appointed, as his principal heir, his legitimate son Diego : in case of his dying without issue, his rights were to pass to his natural brother, the young Fernando ; and lastly, if Fernando also died without leaving children, the inheritance passed to his uncle, Don Bartholomew, and his descendants. He remembered the mother of his child, Donna Beatrice Enriquez, whom he had never married, and with whose abandonment, during his long wanderings on the ocean, his conscience reproached him. He charged his heir to make a liberal pension to her who had been the companion of his days of obscurity, when he was struggling at Toledo, against the hardship of his former lot. He even seemed to accuse himself of some ingratitude or neglect towards this second love, for he appends to the legacy on her behalf, these words, which must have hung heavy on his dying hand,—“and let this be done for the relief of my conscience, for

her name and recollection are a heavy load upon my soul."

Columbus's thoughts next reverted to God, whom he had always looked upon as his only true suzerain, as if he had been the immediate vassal of that Providence, whose instrument and minister above all others he felt himself to be. Resignation and enthusiasm, the two mainsprings of his life, did not fail him in the hour of death. He humbled himself beneath the hand of nature, and was exalted by the hand of God, whom he had always held in sight through all his triumphs and reverses, and of whom he had a nearer view at the moment of his departure from earth. He was full of repentance for his faults, and of hope in his double immortality. A poet in his heart, as may be seen in his discourses and writings, he took from the sacred poetry of the Psalms the last yearnings of his soul, and the last utterance of his lips. He pronounced in Latin his last farewell to this world, and yielded up aloud his soul to the Creator.

The envy and ingratitude of his age and of his King, vanished with the last breath of the great man whom they had made their victim. His contemporaries seemed anxious to make amends to the dead for the persecutions they had inflicted on the living. They gave Columbus a royal funeral. His body, and afterwards that of his

son, after having successively occupied several monuments in various Spanish cathedrals, were removed and buried, according to their wishes, in Hispaniola, as conquerors in the land they had won. They now rest in Cuba. But, by a singular decision of Providence, or an ungrateful caprice of man, of all the lands of America which disputed the honour of retaining his ashes, not one retained his name.

All the characteristics of the truly great man are united in Columbus. Genius, labour, patience, obscurity of origin, overcome by energy of will; mild, but persisting firmness, resignation towards heaven, struggle against the world; long conception of the idea in solitude, heroic execution of it in action; intrepidity and coolness in storms, fearlessness of death in civil strife; confidence in the destiny—not of an individual, but of the human race—a life risked without hesitation or retrospect in venturing into the unknown and phantom-peopled ocean, 1500 leagues across, and on which the first step no more allowed of second thoughts than Cæsar's passage of the Rubicon!—untiring study, knowledge as extensive as the science of his day, skilful but honourable management of Courts to persuade them to truth; propriety of demeanour, nobleness and dignity in outward bearing, which affords proof of greatness of mind, and attracts eyes and hearts; language

adapted to the grandeur of his thoughts; eloquence which could convince kings, and quell the mutiny of his crews; a natural poetry of style, which placed his narrative on a par with the wonders of his discoveries and the marvels of nature; an immense, ardent, and enduring love for the human race, piercing even into that distant future in which humanity forgets those that do it service; legislative wisdom and philosophic mildness in the government of his colonies; paternal compassion for those Indians, infants of humanity, whom he wished to give over to the guardianship—not to the tyranny and oppression—of the old world; forgetfulness of injury, and magnanimous forgiveness of his enemies; and, lastly, piety, that virtue which includes and exalts all other virtues, when it exists as it did in the mind of Columbus—the constant presence of God in the soul, of justice in the conscience, of mercy in the heart, of gratitude in success, of resignation in reverses, of worship always and everywhere.


Such was the man. We know of none more perfect. He contained several impersonations within himself. He was worthy to represent the ancient world before that unknown continent on which he was the first to set foot, and to carry to these men of a new race all the virtues, without any of the vices, of the elder hemisphere. So great was his influence on the destiny of the

earth, that none more than he ever deserved the name of a *Civilizer*.

His influence on civilization was immeasurable. He completed the world ; he realized the physical unity of the globe. He advanced, far beyond all that had been done before his time, the work of God—the SPIRITUAL UNITY OF THE HUMAN RACE. This work, in which Columbus had so largely assisted, was indeed too great to be worthily rewarded even by affixing his name to the fourth continent. America bears not that name ; but the human race, drawn together and cemented by him, will spread his renown over the whole earth.

THE END.

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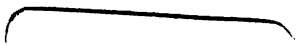


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